

AIR TRANSPORT PAUL LEWIS / WASHINGTON DC

Emirates plans Paris shopping trip

Carrier set to announce massive order at air show for mix of Airbus A380s, A340-600s and Boeing 777-300ERs

Emirates plans to announce a massive new order at the Paris air show in June for up to 69 additional long-range widebodies including Airbus A380-800s, high gross weight (HGW) A340-600s and Boeing 777-300ERs.

The purchases will form part of a plan designed to triple the size of

the Dubai-based carrier over the next 10 years.

The announcement at the air show of a new Emirates order has been expected for several months, but the size and scope of the deal will surprise many. The new deal will comprise: 23 A380s, increasing its total order for the ultra-large air-

craft to 45; 10 A340-600s, plus a similar number of options, marking a launch order for the HGW version; and 26 Boeing 777-300ERs. All will be used to provide incremental growth rather than replace existing capacity.

Emirates is already the single largest A380 customer, having increased its commitment from seven to 22 aircraft, including two freighters, in late 2001. With this latest deal the carrier will account for more than one third of the total order backlog for the 555-seat airliner. The decision to order both the 777-300ER and rival A340-600 is a surprise, but reflects the heavily discounted competing deals put on Emirates' table by Boeing and Airbus, as well leasing companies General Electric Capital Aviation Services and International Lease Finance, both of which are expected to share in the deal.

"We are working towards a 16 June announcement," Emirates confirms. "We placed a large order at the Dubai air show 2001 and it's

likely that this order will be increased at Paris."

The airline had announced in 2001 a letter of intent for 25 more 777s, but at the time did not specify a version. It already operates nine standard 777-200s and 12 stretched -300 versions. Plans to phase out the former have been dropped.

The A340-600 HGW will have a maximum take-off weight of 376,000kg (828,200lb). Emirates already has six longer-range but smaller A340-500s on order to open nonstop routes from Dubai to Sydney and New York, but manufacturer delays have pushed back initial deliveries until September.

While the four-engined A340-600 and the 777-300ER twin come with only one choice of powerplant - the Rolls-Royce Trent 500 and General Electric GE90-115B respectively - the airline intends an engine competition for the A380s. The GE/Pratt & Whitney Engine Alliance GP7200 was selected last year to power Emirates' first batch of 22 aircraft.

A380 PROGRESS MURDO MORRISON / HAMBURG

Airbus foresees 120 orders for ultra-large airliner by year-end

Airbus is confident of hitting the 120-order mark for the A380 by the end of the year, says programme vice-president Charles Champion. Speaking at the official opening of Airbus's A380 major component assembly hall in Hamburg last week, he said the manufacturer was in "advanced discussions" with several customers. However, no Japanese airlines are in that group. Champion says the country's international airlines ANA and JAL are "taking their time to evaluate the A380 and I can understand that. We don't expect a decision very soon."

In his address, Airbus president Noel Forgeard said the A380 would ensure that "we sustain our leadership in the long term" over rival Boeing. He said the "quality of the relationship between government and the private sector" in France and Germany helped give Europe's aerospace industry an advantage over that of the USA. German chancellor Gerhard Schröder said the "critics of the programme have been taught a lesson".

GENERAL AVIATION JUSTIN WASTNAGE / MARSEILLES

Eurocopter may power up EC155 to boost sales

Eurocopter has completed studies of a higher-powered version of the EC155 B1 enhanced Dauphin to rival the long-awaited Bell Agusta Aerospace AB139 medium twin helicopter. The Franco-German manufacturer has carried out detailed engineering studies into a higher gross weight "EC155 HP", but says it will wait until the AB139 enters service before launching production.

Jérôme Combe, manager of military applications for Eurocopter, says the EC155 HP will be based on its higher-powered military stablemate, the EC655 HP currently under development. The latter was designed for use in high-temperature and high-altitude conditions.

Combe says there is a market in the offshore oil worker transport market for an aircraft "to fill the gap between the EC155 and the AB139" but that "the civilian mar-

ket alone is not sufficient to support the production of a prototype". Eurocopter has only sold around 50 EC155s to VIP and offshore customers since March 1999.

Modifications to the aircraft's main gearbox and landing gear have been finalised, but further study into "customer requirements" is needed before a decision to launch is taken, says Combe.

Eurocopter is keen to offer more power for offshore versions of the EC155, as its one-engine out climb speed of 150ft/min (0.76m/s) is close to the minimum required for Category A operation. Combe says the engine is likely to be a growth version of the Turbomeca Arriel 2C2 free-turbine engine. The French engine supplier has been working on an updated version of the 2C2 powerplant using a cooled turbine in response to Honeywell's

LTS101-950 development for the US Coast Guard's Eurocopter HH-65A (AS365N3) Dolphin upgrade programme.

Eurocopter is also considering a study into possible civilian uses of the NH Industries NH90 naval helicopter following search and rescue

trials in Norway. Combe says the airframe provides the "perfect" platform for a future 11,000kg (24,230lb) class civilian helicopter, but it is likely that the expensive military systems and engine would be replaced with those developed for the EC225 Super Puma.



Eurocopter is studying customer requirements before deciding to launch