

# Air France re-activates Concorde from storage

ANDREW DOYLE/LONDON

AIR FRANCE IS boosting its operational BAC/Aerospatiale Concorde fleet to six, with the planned return to service in early July of an aircraft which has been in storage at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport for the past five years.

Despite plans for an expanded fleet, however, the French flag carrier says that it has turned down requests from alliance partners Continental Airlines and Delta Air Lines to buy blocked space on Concorde flights between Paris and New York as part of a code-sharing agreement.

Air France Concorde commer-

cial director Frank Debouck says that the airline's single daily service to New York means that not enough seats are available for a codeshare, but he adds that requests could be reconsidered as the carrier is looking at adding a second daily service. "Continental and Delta requested some seats for a codeshare, but we decided to say no, because we need the seats for ourselves," says Debouck.

He adds that the decision was made to return Concorde F-BVFB to service because the other five aircraft are scheduled to undergo heavy-maintenance checks sequentially from July, as they each approach 12,000 flight hours. Each

aircraft will be out of service for eight to nine months. "We need five aircraft in service for regular flights to New York and for charter flights," he says.

The cost of making the aircraft airworthy is put at Fr30 million (\$5.2 million), with many spare parts having to be specially manufactured by Aerospatiale and British Aerospace. Debouck adds that "five or six" test flights will be carried out in June, to gain formal approval from France's DGAC airworthiness authority to return the aircraft to service.

Air France originally took delivery of seven Concorde, but one has been broken up for spares. □

## FAA will charge user fees for overflights

ALL AIRCRAFT operators flying in US airspace after 19 May must pay a user fee for aviation services, regardless of whether they take off or land in the USA.

The fees, to be assessed against commercial and general-aviation aircraft, were authorised by the US Congress in 1996. The US Federal Aviation Administration says that the rules are consistent with international practices and should produce an estimated \$90 million in revenue during fiscal year 1998.

The tax will be based on distance flown through US-controlled airspace, but will not apply to US Government-owned aircraft. Piston-powered general-aviation aircraft will not be charged a fee for overflights of less than 460km (250nm).

The levy will vary according to aircraft type. The bill for commercial aircraft flying in US-controlled oceanic airspace, for example, will be \$69.50 per 185km. The FAA will charge users monthly. □

## Egypt's AMC orders launch MD-90-30ER

AMC AVIATION of Egypt has placed the launch order for the McDonnell Douglas MD-90-30ER (extended range), with a contract for two aircraft.

The MD-90ER features increased maximum take-off weight (MTOW) and additional fuel tanks, to boost range to over 4,000km (2,200nm).

Compared to the standard MD-90, the ER's MTOW is increased by 5,450kg, to 76,270kg. This makes the aircraft some 900kg heavier than the increased-gross-weight -30 delivered to Great China Airlines in late March (*Flight International* 26 March-1 April, P13).

The Egyptian aircraft, to be delivered in August this year and October 1998, will be operated in a one-class 170-seat layout from bases in Luxor and Hurgada.

MDC says that the aircraft will feature the same strengthened wing structure, landing gear and flap mechanism introduced on the Great China MD-90, as well as the two auxiliary fuel tanks which are located in the aft section of the forward cargo hold. □



## Southwest's 737-700 enters flight-test

THE SECOND BOEING 737-700 is now flying in the colours of launch customer Southwest Airlines. The aircraft, which was unpainted for its maiden 2h 4min flight from Renton on 27 February, achieved an altitude of 41,000ft (12,500m) on 15 March, setting a new record for the type (*Flight International*, 26 March-1 April, P14).

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### ■ NATS BARGAIN

Air-traffic-control (ATC) user charges have dropped by 18% on North Atlantic routes within UK oceanic-control areas. Also cut by 7% are UK National Air Traffic Services (NATS) ATC user charges at UK operator BAA's three London airports. Charges are cut by 13-16% at Scotland's main airports.

### ■ CONTINENTAL 757s

Continental Airlines has added up to 16 firm orders for Rolls-Royce RB.211-powered Boeing 757s. The \$240 million engine order will increase the airline's 757 fleet to up to 41.

### ■ AIRTRAN GROWS

Airtran Airways has acquired its eleventh Boeing 737-200 through a lease deal with Polaris Holding, assisted by General Electric Capital Aviation Services. The latest 737 will be equipped with Nordam Stage 3 hushkits.

### ■ SIA 777 SERVICES

Singapore Airlines (SIA) will introduce its first Boeing 777-200 to service on 15 May. The "Jubilee B777" is the first of 77 Rolls-Royce Trent-powered 777s which SIA has on order and option.

### ■ DIVE FROM CONFLICT

The crew's response to the threat of a mid-air collision caused a Nigerian ADC Airlines Boeing 727-200 to dive the aircraft into a lagoon during its descent to Lagos Airport on 7 November 1996, say investigators. Flight-data and cockpit-voice recorders, read by the US National Transportation Safety Board, show that an air-traffic-control clearance for descent to 5,000ft (1,500m) took the ADC aircraft across the path of a Triax Airlines 727. The ADC pilot rolled his aircraft so violently that he lost control, causing the aeroplane to dive from 16,000ft (4,900m).