

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **AIRTRAN LINKS**

Orlando, Florida-based AirTran Airways has signed a letter of intent to codeshare with Delta Connection carrier Comair, connecting 22 US cities served by AirTran with nine Florida destinations served by Comair.

■ **SKYWEST ENTERS CANADA**

Delta Connection carrier SkyWest launched its first international service on 1 June, with a daily Canadair Regional Jet flight linking Salt Lake City, Utah, with Vancouver, British Columbia. The airline reports increased profits for the year ended 31 March.

■ **FEDEX EXTRAS**

FedEx is to purchase all-cargo frequency allocations to Argentina from Miami-based Arrow Air and Florida West International Airlines. FedEx will add three weekly flights to its daily service.

■ **RAYTHEON IN CHINA**

Raytheon has won a \$4 million Chinese contract to install its ASR-10SS primary and Condor Mk2 secondary surveillance-radars at Guangzhou - to be the US company's ninth air-traffic-control radar installation in China.

■ **AMTRAN PRESIDENT GOES**

Stanley Pace, president of American Trans Air holding company Amtran, has resigned after nine months. Amtran had a good first quarter after a difficult 1996.

■ **MAVERICK SUSPENDS**

US start-up Maverick Airways has suspended scheduled services as it restructures. The carrier began operations on 20 January, linking Denver with Steamboat Springs and Grand Junction in Colorado. Maverick founder and president Cody Diekroeger has been asked to resign, as the airline seeks extra financing.

LanChile grows with 767-300ERs

GRAHAM WARWICK/WASHINGTON DC

LANCHILE has placed orders for three Boeing 767-300ERs, worth \$300 million, and is drawing up a long-range plan to renew and expand its Boeing 737 fleet.

The General Electric CF6-80C2-powered 767s, deliveries of which will be begin in April 1998, are the first to be purchased directly by the Chilean carrier - its existing fleet of ten is leased from a variety of operating-lease companies, including GE Capital Aviation Services, International Lease

Finance and Polaris. LanChile vice-chairman Boris Hirmas says that the 767s will meet the airline's requirements for additional international passenger and cargo capacity. He notes that 80% of the carrier's revenues come from international services.

Hirmas says that a study is under way into replacing LanChile's 15 737-200As with new-generation 737s "...as the market requires".

LanChile was privatised in 1989, when it was sold to an investment group led by SAS, but performed poorly until the current investors

took control in 1994, Hirmas says. Profits have mushroomed from \$300,000 in 1993 to \$38 million in 1996, he says, buoyed by economic growth exceeding 7% a year in Chile and 5% in the rest of Latin America.

The carrier, which plans to sign a codesharing agreement with a major US airline by the end of 1997, has seen its traffic grow by 30% a year, while costs have remained competitive, at around 5¢ per available-seat kilometre, Hirmas says. Cargo accounts for 30% of revenues. □

MDC advances crack checks on MD-90s

MCDONNELL DOUGLAS (MDC) MD-90s will have to be checked for airframe fatigue cracking earlier than originally estimated, results from the fatigue-test airframe and other structural analysis have revealed.

It will be years before the lead airframe in service reaches the newly designated 16,000-cycle point, when the first checks are due, but the US Federal Aviation Administration has issued an airworthiness directive (AD) on the subject.

The 16,000-cycle checks will apply to several principal structural elements (PSE) in the wing, fuselage and tail. The AD requires changes to inspection requirements in a document known as the MD-90 Airworthiness Limitations Instructions. "This is similar to a supplemental inspection document, which [traditionally] comes late in the life of an aircraft, whereas this is a document compiled at entry-into-service," says MDC, which produced the original struc-

tural inspection report based on its own fatigue analysis.

"It changes some of the time-fences for particular inspections, though none of them comes down dramatically and, in fact, some are extended." The FAA says: "The actions specified by this AD are intended to ensure that fatigue cracking of various PSEs are detected and corrected. Such fatigue cracking could adversely affect the structural integrity of these aircraft." □

P&WC delivers first Dash 8-400 engine

PRATT & WHITNEY Canada has delivered the first PW150A turboprop engine for Bombardier's Dash 8-400 70-seat regional airliner. The first flight of the stretched, high-speed -400 is scheduled for December, leading to certification and first deliveries in the second quarter of 1999.

Flight testing of the 3,780kW (5,070shp) PW150A began in January on P&WC's Boeing 720B testbed. The complete Dash 8-400 propulsion system, including propeller and nacelle, is to be flight-tested from late July.

■ Bombardier Regional Aircraft division is to establish a spares-distribution centre for de Havilland Dash 8s and Canadair Regional Jets at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport, operated by TAT Group subsidiary LAB. □



Skyservice introduces A330 in N America

CANADIAN CHARTER AIRLINE Skyservice has become the first North American operator of the Airbus A330, with the recent introduction of an ex-LTU A330-300 on lease from International Lease Finance. The Pratt & Whitney PW4000-powered A330, which is on 42-month lease, is being flown on transatlantic charters from Toronto to European cities, including Athens, Barcelona and Paris, in a 363-seat configuration.