

# Continental Micronesia fights Asia crisis

GUY NORRIS/GUAM

CONTINENTAL Micronesia is expanding its route network, revising its Guam hub operation and modernising its fleet with Boeing 757s and Next Generation 737s as part of plans to counteract the downturn in traffic following the Asian economic crisis.

The first of two new 757-200s due for delivery this month arrived in Guam on 2 March and will be followed by four more by the end of May. The single 757 on loan from parent company Continental will then be returned to the US-based fleet to leave five aircraft operating from Micronesia. "It's very timely," says airline president James Ream

who is using the 757s to replace McDonnell Douglas DC-10-10s on some routes and to build up frequencies on others. The 757s have lower operating costs.

The airline's three DC-10-10s are due to return to the USA by the end of March, along with the last two of five Boeing 727-200s sent to join the mainline Continental fleet as part of restructuring plans announced at the start of the year. The move leaves Continental Micronesia with nine 727-200s, one DC-10-30, five 757s and four 747-200s. "Asia is on its knees and we've tried to respond aggressively. Instead of doing things slowly every quarter, we're leapfrogging that and making the move in one go.

The transfer helps them and helps us. We have the chance to flow excess capacity back stateside where it is needed now," says Ream.

Continental Micronesia also reveals that it is studying the 737-900 as part of plans to replace its 727 with Next Generation 737s from 1999/2000 onwards. "The -800 was pegged as the aircraft of choice, but now Boeing has launched the -900 there's a lot of interest here in that," says Curt Bourg, senior vice-president customer service and sales. The aircraft would be acquired as part of Continental's original Next Generation order, and could well include a mix of types including the -600 and -700, says Ream.

The airline is also expanding services to Japan, where it plans to serve 11 cities by 2000 compared to six at the start of this year. New services are also planned for 1998 to Cairns, Australia, the island of Bali and, pending French Government approval, to Noumea in New Caledonia. The expansion compensates for the closure of once lucrative routes to Seoul which have ceased with the collapse of the South Korean economy.

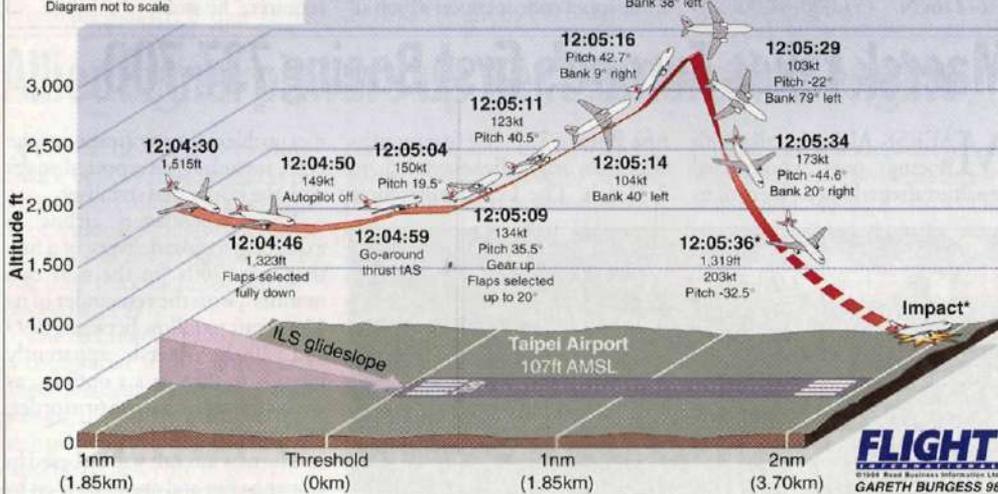
The revised network is linked to changes at the Guam hub, where the timing of the predominantly north-south and east-west flights are being changed to more closely connect with one another and with south and east Pacific locations. □

## China Airlines flight C1676 flight profile, 16 February, 1998, at Taipei International Airport

Source: Taiwan Civil Aeronautics Administration

Note: All times GMT, all heights AMSL.

\* Information between events unknown  
Diagram not to scale



## French independent taps into new routes

FRENCH INDEPENDENT airline AOM has signed a codesharing agreement with TAP Air Portugal under which the two carriers will jointly develop routes to cities in the south of France, Portugal, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The deal follows last year's agreement with Swissair, which AOM business director Jean-Marc Janailac admits has been delayed by a month, and will now take effect "in late March...we have encountered some technical problems implementing the codesharing arrangements".

AOM is to open a route between Swissair hub Zurich and Paris Orly using three leased Boeing 737-500s. Its existing Boeing MD-83s are "too big", says Janailac, adding that the Boeings are also needed "to develop our charter business".

The Zurich route will be opened on 27 April, with three services daily. The summer 1998 season will see frequency increases on several other routes, mainly to the Caribbean, but also on domestic routes between Paris and Nice, Marseille, Toulon and Perpignan.

Passenger growth for 1997 stood at 27% for AOM's long-range routes and 14.5% for medium range services, while overall capacity increased by 9%. □

## Loss of control is key to China Airlines accident

DAVID LEARMOUNT/LONDON

LOSS OF control appears to have been the cause of the China Airlines (CAL) crash at Taipei Airport, Taiwan, on 16 February, according to information which has been made available by the Taiwan Civil Aeronautics Administration (TCAA).

Preliminary flight data recorder readings downloaded for the TCAA by Australia's Bureau of Air Safety Investigation, indicates that

the Airbus Industrie A300-600R's approach to runway 05L was far too high for a safe landing, and that the crew lost control during a manually flown go-around in which extreme pitch attitudes and speeds were allowed to develop (see diagram).

The Administration released details from 1min 6s of the tape. The last data show the aircraft plunging towards the ground through an indicated altitude of 1,319ft (400m) with a nose-down pitch of 37° and its indicated air-

speed increasing through 203kt (376km/h). Airfield elevation is 107ft. The distribution of wreckage indicates that the aircraft hit the ground in a slightly nose up attitude shortly afterwards.

All 196 people on board, and six on the ground, were killed in the crash. On 26 April, 1994, the crew of another CAL A300-600R crashed at Nagoya, Japan, after a similar approach/go-around in which 264 on board died. □