

ROUTES

++ Malaysia Airlines (MAS) has signed its first commercial co-operation agreement with a US carrier, forming a partnership with **Northwest Airlines**. The agreement entails codesharing on MAS services between Kuala Lumpur and Los Angeles, and on Northwest's Kuala Lumpur-Detroit flights. The carriers say they plan to increase co-operation to US and Malaysian domestic routes, which could also be extended to some MAS services within Asia, and US-Malaysia routes via west Asia and Europe. MAS has also signed an agreement with **THY Turkish Airlines** which will lead to codesharing on services between Istanbul and Kuala Lumpur. **++ SAS** and **Icelandair** have agreed a codeshare on routes between Scandinavia and the USA operated by Icelandair and routes operated by SAS from Scandinavia to destinations in Europe. **++ US Airways** is boosting its presence in Europe with new services to Paris and Manchester. Flights between Paris and Charlotte start next April and the Manchester route will link with Philadelphia from May. US Airways has already announced plans to link Charlotte with Frankfurt next May. **++ American Eagle** has expanded regional jet services at its hub at Chicago O'Hare International Airport, replacing turboprop flights to Evansville, Fort Wayne, Madison, Green Bay, Grand Rapids and Milwaukee. The services will be flown with Embraer RJ-135s and RJ-145s. **++ Eva Air's** three weekly services linking Amsterdam with Taipei, Taiwan, which operate via Dubai, will switch to Bangkok as the stopping point on the route, from 31 October. Eva Air will continue to serve Dubai on its route between Paris and Taipei. **++ Qantas** is to codeshare with Samoa-based Polynesian Airlines on services from Melbourne/Sydney via Auckland or Wellington, New Zealand. The deal wraps up most of the south-west Pacific for Qantas, which holds similar agreements with several airlines in the region.



China Airlines' codeshare with American is already on ice over safety issues

US codeshares face FAA probe

RAMON LOPEZ/WASHINGTON DC

FOREIGN AIRLINES wanting approval to codeshare with US carriers will soon face compulsory Federal Aviation Administration scrutiny for safety standards, the FAA warns. It admits, however, that there are issues of domestic and international law to resolve before it can draw up appropriate regulations governing its codeshare approval process.

Safety concerns have been raised by the US Department of Defense (DoD), several US airlines and the US Department of Transportation (DoT), which have formed a task force to review the issue. Codeshares between US and foreign carriers have grown from 61 in 1994 to 163 this year.

Economic, financial and competitive factors are considerations in FAA codeshare decisions. Safety

is not an issue under current rules.

In August, six US airlines that carry US military personnel agreed to conduct safety and operational reviews of their foreign marketing partners within a year against a standard developed by the DoD and the airline industry. Accident rates, maintenance procedures and the condition of aircraft and other equipment are subject to audit, and the deal includes biennial follow-up examinations. The DoD has a legal obligation to audit the safety of US airlines used by US military personnel, but lacks the authority to inspect foreign airlines.

The DoT's Office of Inspector General (OIG) concluded in a recently released report that "safety is not currently treated as a major factor in the codeshare approval process, and the FAA has not taken an active role in the approval or oversight of international code-

share agreements". The OIG wants the FAA to make it compulsory for US carriers to perform safety assessments of foreign codeshare partners. The FAA should develop oversight procedures to validate the safety assessments performed by the US airlines, it says.

"The challenge is to establish procedures that work within the framework of US and international laws," says the FAA. The agency says the issue is being addressed by the DoD/DoT task force.

Meanwhile, Delta Air Lines' and American Airlines' codeshare pacts with Korean Air and China Airlines, respectively, "remain in a holding pattern" as a result of safety concerns. The OIG, however, also casts doubt on the safety record of Thai International Airways, a member of the United Airlines-led Star Alliance. United says the criticism is unfair. □

Air Luxor plans major operations expansion

PORTUGUESE charter airline Air Luxor is to undergo a major expansion of its operations with the addition of a second Lockheed TriStar 500 and the introduction of four Airbus A320s.

The carrier, which has been operating the TriStar for three years, says the demand from tour operators has been such "that we could not ignore the call to expand". The TriStar will be leased

from Novair next month, then leased back to that airline until next April, when it will begin operations to the Caribbean and Europe.

The first A320 will arrive from TAP Air Portugal next March, on lease from GATX, to begin short haul charter flights to European destinations. "We have not decided which ones yet," says the airline. The second aircraft will probably arrive in June, and there are no set

dates for the final two A320s.

Air Luxor's primary business has been executive jet charter, partly with its own fleet and also as a Net-jets Europe joint venture partner. Its jet fleet has been increased, with the addition of three Raytheon Hawker 800XPs, a Cessna Citation II and Citation VII and a Dassault Falcon 2000, with plans to put another four aircraft into service before year-end. □