

Fokker 100 delivery boosts Montenegro operations

IGOR SALINGER/PODGORICA

MONTENEGRO Airlines is planning to boost its operations after taking delivery of its first Fokker 100.

The carrier continues to recover from the setbacks of last year, when Podgorica Airport, its base in the Yugoslavian republic's capital, was closed because of bomb damage to the runway and terminal, and the airline suffered a ban on flights imposed by the European Union.

Radonja Radovic, Montenegro Airlines' commercial manager, says the Fokker 100 was delivered last month, enabling more capacity on current flights and the introduction of new services, with Amsterdam, London, Milan and Moscow under consideration.

The carrier already operates services from Podgorica and Tivat to destinations such as Belgrade, Budapest, Frankfurt, Rome and Zurich. The aircraft was bought from KLMuk for \$12 million, with finance provided by the Montenegrin Government topped up with funds raised from the sale of its two Fokker F28 Mk4000s. One of the F28s has been leased back to fly the summer schedule.

Further fleet modernisation plans include the purchase of a second Fokker 100 by the end of the



Montenegro's fleet update will see F28s (pictured) replaced by Fokker 100s

year, when a decision is due on whether to continue leasing the remaining F28.

Radovic hopes to see annual passenger growth of 30-35% over the next five years, requiring up to three larger aircraft with 120-seat capacity.

Since its start-up in 1997, the carrier has been beset by problems beyond its control. Trade sanctions, flight bans and NATO's operation Allied Force against Yugoslavia have all affected operations. Despite all that, the airline's two F28s carried around 102,000 passengers in 1999.

The Yugoslav republic - favoured by the West because of its political opposition to the Belgrade regime - is using the carrier to

connect Montenegro with other European states, promoting tourism and business links as it moves towards sovereignty from Belgrade.

A second operator has started passenger flights from Montenegro. Pelikan Blue Line, a private company based in Podgorica, acquired its first Ayres Let L-410UVP-E turboprop in February and a second is due to arrive by the end of this month.

Pelikan has introduced services to Bari in Italy, and plans to introduce more international and domestic services as well as flying ad hoc charter operations. Founded in 1997, the airline has previously run flight training, air taxi and cargo services. □

CityFlyer confirms \$360 million Avro RJ and RJX order

BBRITISH AIRWAYS subsidiary CityFlyer Express has confirmed a \$360 million order with BAE Systems for up to 12 Avro RJs and RJXs.

The decision to take a mix of the current version and the new model was exclusively revealed by *Flight International* earlier this month (11-17 July).

CityFlyer managing director Brad Burgess says the new RJ100s are needed later this year to cater for new routes that the airline is planning to introduce, and to upgrade some services operated by its ATR 42/72 turboprop.

"We didn't want to wait another year for the RJX, but we would have taken them if they were available," he says.

CityFlyer, based at London Gatwick, has placed firm orders for six Honeywell LF507-powered RJ100s, for delivery between November and April, bringing its fleet of the type to 16 aircraft. Its six options, for the Honeywell AS977-powered RJX100s, are due to arrive from early 2002.

Burgess says he expects to take over two Gatwick routes currently operated by BA's former French arm Air Liberté - Toulouse and Bordeaux. The airline will continue to phase out its ATRs, and will have halved the fleet from 10 aircraft to five by next summer. CityFlyer ultimately aims to operate an all-jet fleet. □

Eurocontrol presses operators for RVSM compliance plans

EUROCONTROL is intensifying its efforts to determine operators' plans for reduced vertical separation minima (RVSM) compliance and is increasing pressure on European states to meet their RVSM requirements.

RVSM is due to be implemented in European Civil Aviation Conference airspace on 24 January 2002, providing much-needed additional airspace capacity by creating six new flight levels between flight levels 290 and 410 through the reduction of vertical separation

to 1,000ft (300m). Only aircraft with telemetry that meets certain accuracy requirements will be allowed at the RVSM levels.

While "good progress" has been made in many areas of the RVSM programme, Eurocontrol's provisional council is concerned that the lack of sufficient numbers of aircraft modified and approved for RVSM by next March could invalidate the RVSM safety case.

Eurocontrol is increasing efforts to contact operators through briefings, an RVSM user support cell

and direct contact, says Joe Sultana, Eurocontrol's RVSM project manager. The air navigation organisation has not received approval plans for 40% of airframes. A package to support a final RVSM go-ahead decision will be presented to the council in July 2001.

Meanwhile, two-thirds of participating states are on schedule with their RVSM plans, although Eurocontrol is concerned that one-third still have outstanding issues to resolve. Air traffic control systems will require software

upgrades to allow controllers to see RVSM aircraft.

Not all states have yet finalised contracts with software suppliers and there is concern that this could take some time, says Sultana.

The first height-measuring unit, which will gather data for the RVSM safety case, has been operational in Linz, Austria, since May.

A second, in Nattenheim, Germany, will come online in September, and the third, in Geneva, Switzerland, will be commissioned in October. □