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With a full fuel payload and 23 passengers aboard, a Boeing 777-200 set out last night from this Pacific Northwest city at 8:30 p.m. PST in an attempt to set speed and distance records for its size and class of airplane.

Aboard the airplane is a representative of the National Aeronautic Association (NAA), who will monitor and document the Boeing 777 flight parameters necessary to assure compliance. In addition, the passenger list includes Boeing technical, sales and marketing representatives.

The Boeing 777, dubbed "Super Ranger," is attempting to break two existing records held by the Airbus A340-211, which flew Paris-Auckland-Paris on June 17-18, 1993. The A340-211 set the "Great Circle Distance Without Landing" record, traveling 11,814.90 statute miles (19,014.31 kilometers), and it set the record for "Speed Around the World, Eastbound," traveling at an average speed of 490.80 mph (789.86 kilometers per hour). Boeing has established a flight pattern designed to exceed both records.

The airplane, a 777-200 Increased Gross Weight (IGW) version painted in Malaysia Airlines livery, has a complete interior, including passenger seating for 278 and operating galleys and lavatories. It will fly from Boeing Field in Seattle to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, covering the distance in approximately 21.5 hours.

The airplane will land in Kuala Lumpur (at 10:30 a.m. local Malaysia time, April 2) to participate in a Malaysia Airlines 50th Anniversary celebration. Participating in the event in Kuala Lumpur will be Boeing executives Richard Albrecht, executive vice president, Customers, Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, and Seddik Belyamani, vice president, International Sales, and other passengers aboard the airplane. Upon landing in Kuala Lumpur, the plane will have established a new "Great Circle Distance Without Landing" record.

"The 777 has demonstrated its market strength in many ways since its launch, and this record-setting attempt confirms our faith that it has the range and operational capabilities to enhance its reputation as the preferred model in its class," said Albrecht. "We expect great things from this product, and we're convinced it will be the market leader for many years to come. We expect record-setting performance, and this airplane can deliver."

The 777 will refuel at Kuala Lumpur airport, and depart at approximately 1:30 p.m. (local Kuala Lumpur time), flying nonstop to Seattle where it is scheduled to touch down at approximately 3:00 p.m. PST. The Kuala Lumpur segment, which will take approximately 17 hours to fly, will qualify the 777 for a new "Speed Around the World" record upon arrival. The record is determined by dividing the distance by the total time taken to complete both trip segments.

The Boeing 777, which first entered service in May 1995, is an aircraft sized, shaped and launched by market demand. Its design offers features, innovations and approaches to aircraft development that set the standard for delivering value to airlines. The IGW is the newest member of the 777 family of airplanes. This longer-range version of the 777-200 has the same physical dimensions as the initial -200 model, but uses the wing center section to carry an additional 14,200 gallons (53,826 liters) of fuel, for a total of 45,220 gallons (171,170 liters). This increases the range of the 777 from 5,925 miles (9,525 kilometers) to 8,225 miles (13,220 kilometers), with a maximum takeoff weight of 632,500 pounds (286,900 kilograms). British Airways took delivery of the first 777-200 IGW Feb. 7.

The 777 used in the world-record attempt is powered by Rolls-Royce Trent 892 engines, capable of thrust ratings in the 84,000- to 90,000-pound category. The engines are more powerful than current engines and offer excellent fuel efficiency, while allowing the 777 to be as quiet as a 767, even though the 777 engines provide 40 percent more power.

As of March 26, 1997, 53 777s have been delivered to 10 customers around the world. The 777 family of airplanes has attracted 323 orders from 25 customers.

The Boeing 777 has earned a variety of awards, having garnered a 1992 Industrial Design Excellence Award for its passenger cabin, becoming the first airplane honored by the Industrial Designers Society of America. The following year, the industrial designers honored the 777's flight deck as well.

On Feb. 15, 1996, the 777 was named winner of the prestigious Robert J. Collier Trophy by the U.S. National Aeronautic Association. The award honored the 777 as top aeronautical achievement of 1995. Numerous other honors have been awarded to the Boeing 777 and the team that developed the airplane, which is sized between the Boeing 767 and 747-400. Boeing, the world's leading manufacturer of commercial jetliners, is the only airplane-maker offering a complete family of airplanes, serving every need from 100 seats to nearly 600 seats.

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Photos of airplane's arrival in Kuala Lumpur.

