Boeing to Modify Two Stretched Upper Deck 747s for KLM

Boeing Wichita, the Boeing Company's principal site for aircraft modifications, announced today a contract with KLM Royal Dutch Airlines to convert two 747 Stretched Upper Deck (SUD) combi aircraft into dedicated freighters.

The first airplane in the contract is to arrive at Wichita's Modification Responsibility Center this September and deliver early next year.The second aircraft is scheduled for induction in December and delivery next May.

Combi aircraft are configured to carry passengers in the forward part of the airplane and cargo in the aft portion of the main deck. The airplanes also feature a large side door on the main deck for loading cargo.

The contract calls for Boeing Wichita to remove all passenger provisions in the forward main deck, and remove and strengthen floor beams, seat tracks and floor panels in that portion of the aircraft. Workers also will remove the ceiling of the stretched upper deck to create clearance for loading additional 10-foot high cargo pallets and install powered cargo handling and smoke detection systems. The certification for increased takeoff and maximum zero fuel weight operation will be performed as well.

When the modifications are complete, the 747 SUD will be capable of carrying the same volume -- 243,000 pounds -- as 747-200 freighters.

"This contract represents the first time modifications to a 747 SUD will be performed," said Modification Responsibility Center Director Vic McMullen, "and we're very pleased that KLM is our breakthrough customer."

Boeing, in its annual market forecast released earlier this year, projected a requirement for 225 additional large-capacity freighter airplanes by the year 2006. In addition to offering full-service wide-bodied modifications and structural durability updates, Boeing Wichita is authorized and certified to perform 747-300 combi-and passenger-to-freighter conversions, including operating weight upgrades.

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