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The new Boeing 757-300 will strongly enhance Icelandair's competitiveness over the north Atlantic and the U.S. and Europe, according to Hordur Sigurgestsson, chairman of the board of Icelandair. The carrier helped launch the 757-300 with a 1997 order for two of the new models.

In Renton for the rollout of the newest Boeing twinjet, Sigurgestsson said the new 757-300, a derivative of the 757-200, will build on the airline's eight years of success with the 757-200.

"The 757-200 has been a very successful and economical aircraft for Icelandair - in fact, we may in the future focus on a single airplane type for the fleet - the 757," Sigurgestsson added.

At the rollout event, attended by 10,000 employees and guests, Dr. Dietmar Kirchner of Condor Flugdienst announced that his airline would add another 757-300 to the 12 already ordered.

"We are so convinced this airplane will be a money maker for us that we've ordered another one before we've even seen it fly," Dr. Dietmar Kirchner, managing director of Condor told the audience. "The 757-300 has the lowest seat-mile operating costs of any single-aisle airplane on the market - lower than many widebody airplanes. The 757-300 complements our strategy of providing a high-quality, high-service product to the charter market," Dr. Kirchner said.

"We're pleased that these two European airlines have shown the confidence and foresight to launch this new member of the 757/767 family," said Tom Basacchi, Boeing Commercial Airplane Group vice president - Europe and Russia.

The rollout celebration recognizes the work of Boeing employees who, in just 19 months, brought the airplane from concept to reality.

"The talent, skills and commitment of our employees allow us to build the best airplanes in the sky and ensure that we will continue to keep an edge over our competitors," Ron Woodard, president - Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, told the audience.

At 178 feet 7 inches (54.5 meters), the 757-300 is the largest single-aisle twinjet Boeing has made. It is 23 feet 4 inches (7.1 meters) longer and holds 20 percent more passengers than the 757-200. It can carry 240 to 289 passengers, depending on configuration, and has nearly 50 percent more cargo volume than the 757-200.

The 757-300 is designed to allow both chartered and scheduled airlines to fly economically on short-range, medium-range or long-range routes. With a range of about 4,000 statute miles (6,436 kilometers), the 757-300 can fly transcontinental routes and complements the 757-200, which has a slightly longer range of 4,520 statute miles (7,240 kilometers).

Typical routes for the 757-300 would include New York to Los Angeles; Reykjavik, Iceland, to Washington, D.C.; and Frankfurt, Germany, to Tenerife, the Canary Islands. Engines for the airplane are certified to 43,000 pounds of thrust and are available from either Rolls-Royce or Pratt & Whitney.

The 757-300 shares a common flight-crew rating with other models in the 757/767 family, minimizing crew training.

Boeing has set an aggressive goal of seeing the first 757-300 enter service just 27 months after firm configuration, which occurred in November 1996. The first airplane is scheduled for delivery in January 1999, giving the 757-300 the shortest design-to-production and delivery-cycle time of any Boeing derivative airplane program.

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