Boeing 757-300 Flies - Live - For The 1st Time

The first Boeing 757-300 took to the skies for the first time today as people all over the world watched the event live on the Internet.

At 10:08 a.m. PDT, the airplane - painted in Boeing red, white and blue livery - took off from Renton Municipal Airport at Renton, Wash. Boeing employees cheered and video crews shot footage that was webcast live on the Boeing home page on the worldwide web.

After heading north above Lake Washington, Boeing Capts. Leon Robert and Jerry Whites flew the newest member of the Boeing 757/767 family west toward Port Angeles, Wash. The airplane then flew south to Astoria, Ore., and back and forth over Washington state's Olympic Peninsula before landing at Boeing Field in Seattle.

During the 2 hour 25 minute flight, Robert and Whites conducted a series of tests on the airplane's systems and structures. Flight-test equipment on board recorded and transmitted data; the pilots transmitted verbal data back to Flight Test personnel working in a control room at Boeing Field. The same team of specialists later will analyze the data.

From 15,000 feet, Capt. Robert said "The airplane flies great; everything is normal. It flies like a 757-200, which is what we intended."

The 757-300 is a derivative of the 757-200 and is designed to complement the 757-200, not replace it.

Ron Woodard, president - Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, was in Renton to see the airplane off on its inaugural flight. "This airplane has the best seat-mile costs of any single-aisle jetliner on the market," Woodard said. "With that kind of economics, our customers are going to want to add it to their fleets."

Harry Stonecipher, president of The Boeing Company, was on hand to greet the pilots at landing. "It's a great airplane," Stonecipher said. "It fills a vital market niche and provides us yet another way of offering value to our airline customers," Stonecipher said.

The flight-test phase of the 757-300 program officially began with Sunday's flight. The 757-300 flight-test program will pack more flight-test hours into a shorter amount of time than any other major Boeing airplane derivative in recent times. The tight schedule will help Boeing keep to its aggressive goal of seeing the first 757-300 enter service just 27 months after firm configuration - the point at which engineers have defined the specific features of the airplane.

Three 757-300 airplanes will carry out flight testing required by regulatory agencies in the U.S. and Europe.

The 757-300 is 178 feet 7 inches (54.5 meters) long and can carry 240 to 289 passengers, depending on configuration. It is 23 feet 4 inches (7.1 meters) longer than that 757-200, can carry 20 percent more passengers and has nearly 50 percent more cargo volume.

The airplane is designed to allow both charter and scheduled airlines to fly economically on short-range, medium-range or long-range routes. With a range of approximately 4,000 statute miles (6,436 kilometers), the 757-300 can easily fly transcontinental routes.

The 757-300 program was launched in September 1996 with an order for 12 airplanes from Condor Flugdienst of Germany. Icelandair and Arkia Israeli Airlines also have ordered the airplane.

The first airplane, which rolled out of the Boeing factory in Renton, is scheduled for delivery in early 1999.

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