Boeing 737-700 Exceeds Performance Expectations At China's Challenging Airports

A Boeing Next-Generation 737-700 earlier last week demonstrated its prowess at two of the world's most challenging airports, Lhasa and Bangda, China. Boeing flight test pilots, Capts. Leon Robert and Bill Roberson, put the airplane through its planned maneuvers, simulating one inoperative engine on takeoff and landing at both airports in the Tibetan highlands. The demonstration, which was performed in cooperation with China Southwest Airlines and the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), established the performance capabilities of the Next-Generation 737 for potential service in China's developing Western region.

"The flights went very well," said Capt. Robert. "These high-altitude airports are surrounded by steep, mountainous terrain. We've clearly shown that the Next-Generation 737 payload capability can meet the anticipated demands as well as meet all the CAAC regulatory requirements for operations at these airports."

Prior to the trip to China, Robert flew the mission in an engineering flight simulator equipped with the databases and terrain visuals for Lhasa and Bangda. This enabled the team to gather aerodynamic data to predict how the airplane would perform at Lhasa, located at 11,700 feet above sea level, and Bangda which, at 14,200 feet above sea level, is the highest commercial airport in the world.

"This flight felt a lot like I was flying in the simulator," said Capt. Robert. "I believe the data we collected from this demonstration will exceed all of the requirements for performance out of these airports."

The demonstration follows statements earlier this year by China's government that it places a high priority on stimulating economic development of its Western region, including tourism and business investment. Currently China Southwest Airlines operates 757-200s from Lhasa and Bangda. The airline owns or leases 20 737-300s and has scheduled deliveries or commitments for 12 Next-Generation 737-600s and -800s. Overall, 16 of China's airlines operate 190 737s, and of these, seven airlines have taken delivery of 34 Next-Generation 737s.

"We think the Next-Generation 737 continues to be an excellent business solution for China's rapidly developing air travel markets," said Carolyn Corvi, vice president and general manager, 737 Program. "This is an advanced-technology airplane with superior economics. It's a powerful combination that will allow airlines to establish and grow routes throughout China's West, giving people reliable, more frequent service to their destinations."

While the Next-Generation 737s are the newest, most advanced design airplanes in their market segment today, they retain the reliable and economical characteristics that made 737 Classics so popular worldwide. Dramatic revisions to the newest 737s include a brand new wing design for improved fuel capacity and increased aerodynamic efficiency. Designers also drew inspiration from the award-winning Boeing 777, placing large displays in the flight deck and updating the passenger cabin with contoured walls and ceilings, creating spaciousness and greater stowage capacity than the Classic 737s.

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