Air France Buys New Boeing Longer-Range 747-400 Freighter

Air France has signed a definitive agreement for two new Boeing Longer-Range 747-400 Freighters. This makes the European carrier the second customer for the airplane, which was launched earlier this month with the announcement of a five-airplane order by International Lease Finance Corporation (ILFC).

This order is an existing order that has been accounted for in cumulative totals published by Boeing. Until today, however, the customer for the order was unidentified. The first airplane will deliver to Air France in October 2002.

"We plan to use the advantages of the Longer-Range 747-400F on destinations such as Mexico City, Hong Kong, Sao Paolo, Brazil, and Bangkok, Thailand," said Marc Boudier, Air France Cargo executive vice president. "We can use its increased capability to fly non-stop with a nearly full payload."

Air France is the fourth largest freight carrier in the world and carries more than 5 billion Revenue Tonne Kilometers (RTKs) per year. Air France, along with Delta Air Lines and Korean Air, was a founding member of one of the largest cargo alliances in the world, the SkyTeam Cargo Alliance, which launched in September last year.

A key element to the ever-expanding cargo market is Air France's cargo center, G1XL, which is currently capable of handling 1 million metric tons of freight per year and will be expanding to 1.4 million mketric tons by the end of 2004.

Air France's Boeing fleet - which includes 737s, 747s, 767s and 777s - is one of the largest in Europe. Among its 38 in-service 747s are 11 747-200 Freighters and 13 high-technology 747-400s.

"This new Longer-Range 747-400 Freighter is the lead member of the 21st century 747 family, and it's going to play a major role in the ever-increasing air cargo market," said Toby Bright, Boeing vice president of Sales for Europe/Russia. "It will broaden the opportunities for new routes with high traffic volumes immeasurably."

The Longer-Range 747-400 Freighter has a maximum takeoff weight of 910,000 pounds (412,770 kilograms). This takeoff weight increase of 35,000 pounds (15,876 kilograms) over existing 747-400s allows the Longer-Range 747-400 Freighter to fly an additional 530 nautical miles (982 kilometers). Or, it can carry an additional 22,000 pounds (9,980 kilograms) of payload on long-range flights at maximum takeoff weight.

The Longer-Range 747-400 Freighter will carry more than 113 metric tons of payload, the same as the existing 747-400 freighter. Both airplanes will have the industry's lowest operating cost per metric ton mile. Compared to the existing 747-400 Freighter, the Longer-Range 747-400 Freighter has strengthened parts of its wing, fuselage, and landing gear - all to support the 35,000 pounds (15,876 kilograms) of additional takeoff weight capability.

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