Boeing Delivers First 747-400 Extended Range Freighter to Air France

The first model of the newest Boeing [NYSE: BA] cargo jet, the 747-400ER (extended range) freighter, now is in service with Paris-based Air France.

Air France has committed to take five of the new freighters, which will go into service in the next four years. The first of the freighters to be delivered by Boeing was leased from International Lease Finance Corporation.

"The 747-400ER will allow us to fly freight non-stop on routes to North and South America and Asia that have previously required refueling stops," said Marc Boudier, Air France Cargo executive vice president. "We plan to use the airplane to reach such destinations as Shanghai, Seoul, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Mexico City and Houston."

The new freighter can fly 1,700 nautical miles (3,204 kilometers) farther than the 747-200 freighter and 530 nautical miles (982 kilometers) farther than the 747-400 freighter. Air France Cargo currently operates a fleet of 11 Boeing 747-200s.

Boudier also said the new freighter will generate less takeoff noise at airports, a factor important in environmentally conscious Europe.

Due to advanced jet engine technology, a 747-400ER is 55 percent quieter on takeoff than a 747-200.

"Not only will this new freighter allow Air France Cargo to fly nonstop routes half way around the word, but also it will bring them significant cost savings, " said Marlin Dailey, vice president of European Sales, Boeing Commercial Airplanes.

Dailey said the cost of operating a 747-400ER freighter is almost 17 percent less than the 747-200 freighters currently in the Air France Cargo fleet.

Air France, which is the fourth largest freight carrier in the world, handles more than 5 billion revenue tonne*-kilometers per year. A key element to Air France's success in the cargo market is its G1XL cargo center in Paris, which is currently capable of handling more than 1 million tonnes of freight per year and will be expanding to 1.4 million tonnes by the end of 2004.

Air France Cargo offers 1,700 daily flights to 202 destinations worldwide.

The new Boeing 747-400ER freighter has a maximum takeoff weight of 910,000 pounds (412,770 kilograms), an increase of 35,000 pounds (15,876 kilograms) over 747-400 freighters. The increase allows the 747-400ER to either fly farther or carry an additional 22,000 pounds (9,980 kilograms) of freight. To support the additional weight, the new model has strengthened parts in its wings, fuselage and landing gear.

The Boeing 747 Freighter fleet of more than 250 airplanes provides more than half of the world's freighter capacity. The 747 family was designed with cargo as a primary consideration and the single main deck provides for optimal operational efficiency.

The 747-400ER freighter also has been ordered by a second European customer, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines.

*Note: Tonne refers to a metric ton.

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For further information:
Cheryl Addams
(206) 766-2919, Seattle
Jean-Marc Fron
32-2-777-0742, Brussels