Vietnam Airlines Flies High with its First Boeing 777-200ER

With the gleaming golden lotus adorning its tail as its brand new logo, Vietnam Airlines' first Boeing [NYSE: BA] 777-200ER (Extended Range)airplane took off today from Paine Field in Everett, Wash.

Vietnam Airlines is leasing the airplane from International Lease Finance Corp. (ILFC), a member company of American International Group, Inc.

The 777 airplane is the first of two that ILFC is leasing to Vietnam Airlines, the second of which will be delivered in June 2003. Vietnam Airlines also purchased four 777s directly from Boeing in January 2002. The first delivery of their direct-purchase airplanes is scheduled in August 2003.

The milestone delivery indicates the growing relationship between the nations of Vietnam and the United States and the partnership among Vietnam Airlines, ILFC and Boeing.

"We are very glad to be adding this beautiful 777 to our growing fleet," said Nguyen Xuan Hien, president of Vietnam Airlines Corporation. "Our passengers will be most impressed with our new 777 service, and we are certain that having the brand new, technologically advanced 777 in our fleet will allow us to be most competitive in satisfying our passenger demands."

General Electric engines will power the two leased 777s. United Technologies' Pratt and Whitney division will supply engines for the four direct-purchase airplanes.

The unmatched range and superior economics of the 777 will give the airline more flexibility in flight planning and in the introduction of new non-stop direct flights connecting Hanoi and Ho Chi Min City with Tokyo, Paris and other key international cities. The ILFC-leased, GE-powered 777 airplane will commence long-range, non-stop service on routes between Vietnam and Paris in summer 2003. The 777 is ideally suited for such long-range, non-stop flights. It is the world's most efficient twin-engine airplane and has an impressive schedule reliability rate of more than 99 percent -- the best in its class.

"The placement of the 777 in Vietnam Airlines' fleet is a significant milestone," said Steven Udvar-Hazy, chairman and CEO of ILFC.

"With this delivery, Vietnam Airlines is truly becoming a global carrier," Udvar-Hazy said. "ILFC is committed to being a long-term, strategic partner to Vietnam Airlines, and we look forward to the successful launch of Vietnam Airlines' 777 operations."

The new airplanes will feature an all-new Vietnam Airlines' decor in the spacious, award-winning "Boeing Signature Interior" that was designed to provide maximum comfort to passengers on longer intercontinental flights. The passenger cabin features larger overhead stowage bins that are designed to open downward for convenient loading, and the high ceiling provides passengers a more spacious, open environment.

"Our relationship with Vietnam Airlines involves many levels of working together throughout each of our entire organizations as they upgrade and grow their fleet with the most technologically advanced airplane in the world," said Larry Dickenson, senior vice president of Sales -- Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "We look forward to a mutually beneficial partnership for many years to come."

As Vietnam's flag carrier, Vietnam Airlines will operate a fleet of 30 airplanes by the end of 2003. It will include four Boeing 777s and eight Boeing 767-300s.

Worldwide, more than 30 customers have ordered 618 Boeing 777s of all models and more than 430 are in service.

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