Boeing Selects EGAT for 747 Large Cargo Freighter Modifications

Boeing [NYSE: BA] has selected Evergreen Aviation Technologies Corporation (EGAT) to convert three 747-400 passenger jets into cargo freighters that will be used to transport major assemblies for the all-new Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

EGAT is a joint venture of EVA Air and General Electric. It's part of Taiwan 's Evergreen Group. Boeing 787 Vice President of Manufacturing and Quality Scott Strode joined EGAT Chairman David Wang and EVA President K.W. Chang in Taipei today to formally sign the modification services agreement. Financial terms aren't being disclosed.

"The Large Cargo Freighter is a critical component of our 787 manufacturing plan," Strode said. "We're proud to partner with EGAT on what is truly a one-of-a-kind Boeing airplane."

Initially Boeing will rely on two Large Cargo Freighters, with a third to follow later. Boeing purchased the first two airplanes last year. Modification of the first will begin at about mid-year. The Large Cargo Freighter will be certified during 2006 and return to service to support the final assembly of the first Dreamliners in 2007.

Boeing has 191 announced firm orders and commitments for the 787 from 15 airlines.

David Wang, chairman of EGAT, said "today's agreement signals EGAT's entry into the aircraft conversion business, a goal we have pursued for some time. It furthers EGAT's reputation as a reliable partner delivering the highest-quality work at exceptional value."

Moving major 787 assemblies by air to the 787's Everett, Wash., final assembly facility could save 20 to 40 percent compared to traditional shipping methods, and reduce delivery times to as little as one day from as many as 30 today. Such savings will allow Boeing to recoup its initial investment in the 747s during the first few years of 787 production.

EGAT will modify the airplanes in its 127,464-square-foot (11,685 square meters) maintenance hanger that opened in December 2004 at Taipei 's Chiang Kai-Shek International Airport. The facility can accommodate a 747-400 aircraft and two narrow-body jets at the same time.

"We're honored that Boeing has placed its trust in EGAT to perform this important modification work," EVA's President K.W. Chang said. "We're proud to join the team of partners around the world who are contributing to 787 Dreamliner's success."

The Large Cargo Freighter's unique design will feature an entire aft fuselage that swings open for loading. Modifications to enlarge the upper fuselage will increase the volume of the main cargo deck to 65,000 cubic feet (1,845m3), 300 percent more capacity than the 747-400 Freighter, the largest freighter in regularly scheduled service.

Launched in April 2004, the 787 is a family of airplanes in the 200- to 300-seat class that will carry passengers on routes between 3,500 and 8,500 nautical miles (6,500 to 16,000 kilometers), such as between Taipei and Dubai , Beijing to New York City , and Shanghai to Los Angeles . The 787 will allow airlines to offer passengers more of what they want: affordable, comfortable, nonstop, point-to-point travel to more destinations around the world.

The 787 will use 20 percent less fuel than today's airplanes of comparable size, and provide airlines with up to 45 percent more cargo revenue capacity. Passengers will find significant innovations including a new interior environment with higher humidity, wider seats and aisles, larger windows, and other conveniences.

In addition to bringing big-jet ranges to mid-size airplanes, the 787 will fly at Mach 0.85, as fast as today's fastest commercial airplanes, while using much less fuel. The 787 family offers two engine types, the General Electric GENX (GE Next Generation) or Rolls-Royce's Trent 1000.

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