Boeing and Air France Announce 747-400 Special Freighter Order

Boeing [NYSE-BA] and Air France today announced an agreement to turn three 747-400 airplanes into full freighter configuration as part of the Boeing 747-400 Special Freighter program.

The value of the agreement isn't being released. Air France is one of seven 747-400 Special Freighter customers, and the first to announce plans to convert its former Combi airplanes, which are currently in all-passenger configuration.

Air France will receive its first modified airplane in June, 2007.

"These converted airplanes will accelerate the phasing out of the 747-200 Freighters in preparation of the entry in service of the 777 Freighters," said Pierre Vellay, Air France senior vice president, new aircraft and corporate fleet planning.

Boeing produced and delivered 61 747-400 Combi airplanes (called 747-400M) to 13 customers between 1989 and 2002.

The Boeing 747-400 Special Freighter conversion program was launched in January 2004 and to date has announced 33 firm orders and 29 options.

For the conversions ordered by Air France, the 747-400 former Combi airplanes receive a strengthened main-cabin floor, a full main-deck lining and provisions for a new cargo handling system with an upgraded flight deck. The 747-400 Special Freighter has positions for 30 cargo pallets on the main deck -- comparable volume to that of a new 747-400 Freighter. It is also capable of seating up to 19 people, an option found on no other converted freighter.

Boeing offers customers reliable conversion-based engineering and certification expertise. Customers may choose from several support packages that can be incorporated during freighter conversions, including avionics and flight-deck upgrades, customized maintenance programs and integration of technical manuals.

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