First 747-400 Boeing Converted Freighter Takes Flight

Flight Test Program Begins with Flight from Xiamen to Hong Kong

Boeing [NYSE: BA] and launch customer Cathay Pacific Airways celebrated the arrival in Hong Kong of the first Boeing 747-400 passenger airplane to be converted to a freighter as part of the 747-400 Boeing Converted Freighter program.

The prototype airplane was flown from Xiamen, People's Republic of China -- where the modification was performed and certification ground testing was started -- to Hong Kong, where the flight test and certification will be completed over the next few months.

"The start of flight testing for the first 747-400 Boeing Converted Freighter is another in a long series of accomplishments achieved by our employees, our suppliers and our customer, Cathay Pacific Airways," said Lou Mancini, vice president and general manager for Boeing Commercial Aviation Services.

This is the first time Boeing has conducted a major flight test program outside the United States. It will be done by a Boeing flight test crew on site in Hong Kong in cooperation with Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific Airways, along with HAECO and TAECO, aircraft maintenance and engineering companies based in Hong Kong and Xiamen respectively. The Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department is assisting.

The Boeing flight test crew plans to accumulate up to 200 hours of in-flight testing, which includes a prescribed and rigorous routine of scenarios that will certify the airplane's fire detection and suppression systems. The 747-400BCF is the first major Boeing program to be certified in accordance with the new U.S. Federal Aviation Authority Changed Product Rule.

Redelivery to Cathay Pacific Airways is scheduled for December.

747-400 Boeing Converted Freighter History

Engineering and support work began at Boeing facilities in the Puget Sound area of Washington State, Long Beach, Calif., and Moscow, Russia, shortly after Boeing's decision to offer the conversion to customers in October 2003.

Boeing announced Cathay Pacific Airways as launch customer in January 2004. The program was then called the 747-400 Special Freighter, and was recently renamed the 747-400 Boeing Converted Freighter to signify a passenger-to-freighter conversion that takes advantage of Boeing's technical expertise, program management skills, certification experience and aftermarket support. The 747-400BCF demonstrates Boeing's ability in large-scale systems integration within a lean, global enterprise.

The first modification kit of components was fabricated, assembled and shipped to Taikoo (Xiamen) Aircraft Engineering (TAECO) in Xiamen in December 2004, and TAECO began hands-on conversion work in early 2005. By April, a modification crew removed a large section of the aft left fuselage of the passenger airplane and later installed a main-deck cargo door in the opening. This dramatic step in the conversion process is one of many that took place through September, and included replacing and strengthening fuselage frames, replacing the airplane's floor beams to receive a cargo-handling system and upgrading or replacing its airplane systems and flight deck.

Following approximately a month of ground testing, the airplane was readied for its first flight from Xiamen to Hong Kong.

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For further information:
Vicki Ray
Boeing Commercial Airplanes Public Relations
mobile: 206-852-3319
vicki.l.ray@boeing.com
Linda Lee
Boeing Commercial Airplanes Public Relations
206-766-2905
Linda.a.lee@boeing.com