



BRIEFING

BOC DEAL FUELS A320 BACKLOG

ORDER BOC Aviation placed an additional order for 18 Airbus A320neo- and 12 A320ceo-family aircraft in late December 2015. Flightglobal's Fleets Analyzer database shows the lessor as already having 123 A320-family aircraft in its portfolio and, prior to the latest commitment, another 92 of the type on order.

WEAPONS UPGRADE FOR CZECH GRIPENS

MODIFICATIONS The Czech Republic's leased fleet of Saab Gripen C/Ds will undergo modifications to enable them to carry new guided and unguided bombs, via a SKr120 million (\$14.2 million) deal signed with Sweden's FXM defence and security export agency. Prague last year committed to extending operations with its current 14 Gripens until at least 2027.

CRJ900 SALES SURPASS 400 UNITS

FLEET China Express Airlines is ordering another 10 Bombardier CRJ900s, taking its firm commitment to 38. The Chongqing-based carrier has already taken delivery of 20 of the regional jets and will convert options on the remaining eight, says the airframer. The agreement – worth nearly \$463 million at catalogue prices – takes overall orders for the 90-seat CRJ900 past the 400 mark.

BRAZILIAN H225M HITS FULL CAPABILITY

ROTORCRAFT Helibras has delivered the first H225M helicopters to Brazil's air force and army in a full operational capability standard. The Airbus Helicopters subsidiary handed over seven of the 11t-class rotorcraft in 2015, with 22 now delivered from an eventual 50. The new configuration adds a locally-developed countermeasures system and, in air force examples, an in-flight refuelling capability.

EGYPTAIR FINED AFTER SUDANESE LEASE

PENALTY EgyptAir is to pay a fine to the US government after it leased Sudan Airways a pair of Boeing 737-500s between August 2010 and February 2011 in breach of US sanction regulations. The flag-carrier will pay a total of \$140,000 in instalments, starting no later than February and to be completed by November 2016.

INDONESIAN AIR FORCE GETS EXTRA 737

TRANSFER Indonesia's air force has bought one Boeing 737-500 from Garuda Indonesia, with the aircraft transferred at Halim air base near Jakarta on 7 January. Flightglobal's Fleets Analyzer database shows the CFM International CFM56-engined aircraft as having been built in 1997. In 2011, Garuda sold two 737-400s to the air force, which uses them for VIP transport purposes.

KA-226T PRODUCTION PACT TAKES OFF

MANUFACTURING Russian state firm Rostec will work with Hindustan Aeronautics to build at least 200 Kamov Ka-226T light utility helicopters at a new facility to be constructed in Tumakuru, India. In May 2015, New Delhi selected the Ka-226T for its 197-unit reconnaissance and surveillance helicopter deal.

AGUSTAWESTLAND NAME DITCHED BY PARENT

BRANDING Finmeccanica appears to have dropped the AgustaWestland brand from its new unified structure, with the division from 1 January referred to as Finmeccanica Helicopters. But the company is maintaining its current AW product designations. The rebrand is part of Finmeccanica's "One Company" initiative.

SAFETY DAVID LEARMOUNT LONDON

Focus is shifting to security threats

Deliberately-caused airline disasters are becoming more prominent, as number of accidents continues to dwindle

The number of fatal airline accidents hit another new low in 2015, as did passenger and crew casualties, meaning safety figures look good even if deliberately-caused disasters are added.

Figures for 2015 show nine fatal accidents, in which 176 people died. This compares with 2014's 18 and 432, respectively.

The most significant risk to passengers appears to be shifting from accidents towards security threats. A comparison of deliberately-caused crashes shows two in 2015, causing 374 deaths. These were the Germanwings Airbus A320 incident in the French Alps on 24 March – believed to have been caused by the co-pilot; and

the Russia-bound MetroJet Airbus A321 that exploded over Egypt's Sinai peninsula on 31 October. The latter is believed to have been sabotaged while on the ground at Sharm el-Sheikh.

There were two such events the previous year, and 510 deaths: Malaysia Airlines flight MH370's disappearance – thought to have been caused by someone on board; and the missile shoot-down of the carrier's flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine. Both incidents involved Boeing 777s.

Flight International's 19-25 January issue will present an in-depth analysis of global airline safety performance in 2015. ■

See Feature next week

DEBUT ARIE EGOZI TEL AVIV

Urban Aeronautics sets AirMule free of its tether

Urban Aeronautics' AirMule completed its first autonomous, untethered flight at Megiddo airfield in northern Israel on 30 December 2015. The company plans to demonstrate the unmanned type's cargo delivery capability and beyond line-of-sight flight through a forested area.

"We expect in 2016 we will finally be able to demonstrate some of AirMule's unique capabilities," says Rafi Yoeli, chief executive of UrbanAero; the parent company of Tactical Robotics, which developed the vertical take-off and landing aircraft. The first untethered flight was delayed, with UrbanAero revealing its 2015 activities were interrupted after "a ground incident that damaged our AirMule demonstrator". It used a pause in testing to integrate new equipment and safety features.

The company has also secured

export certification for the Cormorant variant. It will carry a payload of 440kg (970lb) for 162nm (300km), or an increased load over a shorter distance. Maximum speed will be 100kt (185km/h). ■



Unmanned aircraft took to the air from Megiddo airfield in Israel