

All cargo airline enters the Middle East market



Preparing for take off: To mark its entrance into the Middle East market, MIDEX Airlines showcased its Airbus A300B4-203F aircraft at this year's Dubai Air Show ■

Following months of preparation, MIDEX Airlines will begin scheduled operations in the UAE by the end of this year.

Commencing life in the region as a cargo airline, MIDEX will initially serve six destinations from its hub in Al Ain International Airport, including Mumbai, Kochin, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Beirut and Orly in France. The routes will initially be served through a fleet of six Airbus A300B4-203F aircrafts operated by 54 pilots, mainly deriving from the US. Each aircraft is capable of carrying up to 45 tonnes and will offer cool chain solutions for perishable products and fresh produce.

"We will be the UAE's first dedicated cargo airline and the largest cargo operator in the Middle East with a privately owned fleet," claimed Issam Khairallah, president, MIDEX Airlines.

"We will operate scheduled flights daily to all six destinations with cargo initially," he added.

Earlier this year, the carrier received its UAE operators licence for both passenger and cargo services and has since been busy acquiring aircrafts and completing all necessary checks. During the Dubai Airshow last month, MIDEX signed a multi-million dollar deal to buy one Boeing B747-200F due for delivery in April 2008. Purchased from Martinair, the 105 tonnes capacity freighter has a range of 10-12 hours flight time and will be employed on a daily route between Al Ain and Orly.

"The new aircraft is a nose-loader Boeing B747-200F freighter which will not only allow us to take on much bigger and more diversified shaped cargo, but it will also expand our capacity by 50%, raising it to more than 300 tonnes daily," said Khairallah.

Opting for the less saturated location of Al Ain, MIDEX has identified the airport's close proximity to Oman, Abu Dhabi and Dubai as a strong factor behind the selection. Joining Empost, which earlier this year initiated a freighter service from Al Ain, the carrier has acquired a large spare parts inventory for its Airbus models in order to prevent ground delays.

"For us, the crowning factor was that Al Ain is not a crowded airport like other UAE airports. We get a nice straight approach every time, saving on time and fuel while clearances are quicker to obtain providing us with the shortest possible turnaround time," said Jassim Al Bastaki, director general, MIDEX.

The airline is part of the MIDEX Group, which has a turnover of roughly US\$5.3 billion and is the agent for the likes of Royal Mail Group, La Poste, Swiss Post, ABX and Garantpost. MIDEX Airlines was created in 1990 from its hub in Orly, near Paris, and today has over 25,000 employees in 32 countries worldwide.

Commenting on the arrival, Atif Ur Rehman, logistics consultant at Xvise Innovative Logistics said, "The announcement of a new airline brings two types of news. One is for the consumer, which is positive as these service providers compete with other airlines for airfreight traffic that results in improvement of services, standards and a competitive price.

"On the other hand this competition means low pricing structure and less yields. In the future there will be a point where the load capacity will exceed the capacity demand and to survive in this industry companies have to rely on networking and load share to operate the aircrafts on full capacity," he added.