

PAYLOAD

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ASIA

MASKargo moots regional feeder service



Freight forwarding
Suppliers

Boeing sees strong freighter conversion market in Asia

Boeing is serious about aircraft conversions and sees Asia as a strong market for this business. For one, Boeing's World Cargo Forecast projects that Asia will remain a leader in air cargo growth.

While the forecast estimates that world air cargo traffic will expand at an average annual rate of 6.2 percent for the next two decades - tripling over current traffic levels, Asian air cargo markets will continue to lead the world air cargo industry with the domestic Chinese and intra-Asian markets expanding 10.6 percent and 8.5 percent per year, respectively.

Such estimates leave Boeing executives to believe that carriers in the market will turn to ordering passenger aircraft that are converted to freight configurations as a way to economically grow their fleets.

"Because Asia recovered more quickly after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, we received our first orders for the 747-400 Boeing Converted Freighters from Asia," says Vicki Ray, Boeing spokesperson.



Cathay Pacific Airways has taken delivery of the first converted Boeing 747-400 passenger aircraft.

A prime example, on October 5, Boeing 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 747-400BCF programme. Modification of the aircraft took place in Xiamen, China where Boeing's Asian partner, TAECO, began hands-on conversion work in early 2005 as well as certification ground testing.

Boeing announced Cathay Pacific Airways as launch customer in January 2004. "Basically, Boeing does the design work, programme management and certification and oversees the conversions, then TAECO does the hands on work and modifications," explains Ray.

Boeing owns nine percent of supplier-partner TAECO, with the Swire Group of Companies also an investor.

Now completed, the prototype airplane has been flown from Xiamen 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,” comments Lou Mancini, vice president and general manager for Boeing Commercial Aviation Services.

“For us, this is the first major flight test programme we have done overseas,” she adds. “Generally, we test in the US. But in this case, we chose Hong Kong because Cathay is located there and they are the customer for which the plane was converted.”

Currently, Boeing has 35 firm orders, 29 options and seven customers on the books for converted aircraft. Among them are orders from Singapore Airlines, Nippon Cargo Airlines, Korean Air, and Japan Airlines, as well as Europe’s Air France and Guggenheim Aviation Partners, a US leasing company. The 747-400BCF demonstrates Boeing’s ability in large-scale systems integration within a lean, global enterprise.

In addition to TAECO, Boeing also utilises supplier SASCO, which does conversions in Singapore.

“They have been awarded our Supplier of the Year,” Ms. Ray comments. “SASCO is always reliable and converts MD-11 aircraft for us.”

Boeing offers both conversion and factory-built programmes. Both involve different size aircraft, which Boeing executives believe gives good coverage for cargo market needs.

“A lot of passenger airplanes are getting older. If you want to beef up your cargo program, we offer the conversion programme to convert passenger planes to freighters,” Ray says.

“We also have 747-400 factory-built freighters that offer the big nose door, which is good for operators with oversized cargo.” - *Karen Thuermer*

FSI, GAMECO eye conversion for China Southern

Seattle-based engineering company Flight Structures (FSI) said it is negotiating a passenger-to-freighter conversion programme for the A300-600 with China Southern Airlines.

According to sources, Guangzhou Aircraft Maintenance Engineering (GAMECO) is thought to be the preferred candidate to carry out the conversions.



Based at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, GAMECO, which recently completed its first-ever Boeing 747 “C1” check for China Southern’s 747-400 freighter, is a joint venture between China Southern and Hong Kong-based Hutchison Whampoa (China) Ltd.

FSI, which jointly developed the conversion programme with BAE Systems and took over the programme when the UK company exited the conversion business three years ago, is seen as a potential competitor to Dresden-based EADS-EFW, which is the leading conversion specialist for the A300-600.

If the conversion contract is awarded to FSI, China Southern will become the launch customer for FSI's programme and GAMECO could establish itself as an FSI conversion centre outside the US.

China Southern has a fleet of six A300-600Rs, which the airline acquired when it took over China Northern Airlines in 2004.

Bedek eyes Asian demand for B767 and B737 conversions

Demand is picking up for both 767 and 737 freighter conversions at Bedek Aviation Group, part of Israel Aircraft Industries, and Jacob Netz, its director analysis and strategy for freighter conversions, reckons both aircraft will be popular in Asia.

“I think the 767 will have an excellent future in Asia, as it can fly both within the region and on intercontinental routes,” he says. He also points out that many carriers in the region have the type in their passenger fleet, while JAL and Asiana also operate 767-300 production freighters.

Until now orders for Bedek’s 767-200 programme have been from the Americas and Europe. Danish airline Star Air, which flies for UPS in Europe, has so far taken delivery of seven of the aircraft, with four more on order, while five have been delivered to ABX and four to Colombia’s Tampa. Bedek also picked up an order from US express carrier ABX in September to convert 12 767-200s purchased from Delta.

US and European orders have also predominated for the 737-300, of which Bedek has so far converted 19 for Kitty Hawk, TNT, Channel Express in the UK, Axis in France, and Bluebird in Iceland. However, Netz says discussions are also advanced with an unnamed Asia-Pacific customer.

for this type, thought to be Qantas.



Picture shows Bedek engineers working on the floor beam replacement of a B747.

He predicts that this will be the ideal aircraft for domestic Chinese routes, and says Bedek already has interested customers in the PRC. However, a problem is that only a limited number of conversion candidates are available in Chinese passenger fleets, while other possible candidates fall foul of China's rule about not importing aircraft more than 15 years old.

Despite this, Bedek is considering joining forces with China's GAMECO to set up a conversion line for the type in Asia, and is also looking closely at the potential of the 737-400 in the region.

"The Asia-Pacific accounts for more than a third of the 737-400s in passenger service, and we have already had some definite interest in converting this type," Netz says.

Bedek is also working on its 767-300 programme, in anticipation that demand will pick up when delivery of 787s and A350s start in a couple of years' time, and it is close to announcing a launch customer for its 757-200 programme, which it is offering in conjunction with ST Aero in Mobile, Alabama.

The two companies converted most of the 34 757s that were taken by DHL, using a Boeing STC. E they are now offering their own version, though still in conjunction with Boeing. This has 15 pallets rather than 14.5 as on the DHL solution, and other improvements. However, Netz currently sees more limited demand for this in Asia. "It is a good freighter, but even on the passenger side very few 757s are flying in Asia," he says.

Meanwhile on the popular B747-400SF programme, Bedek is now full until the last quarter of 2010 has never happened to us before that we have had customers queuing up to get earlier slots and being willing to pay more for them," Netz says.

Though he declines to give a total number of orders, declared customers include lessors Rabobank, Guggenheim and GECAS, as well as Atlas, Asiana and EVA Air, the latter having signed for four firm conversions.

Bedek's first conversion of the type – a combi being converted to freighter for Air China – is nearing completion and should get its STC early next year. Work will then start on the first pure passenger

freighter conversion, which is due to be certified by the end of 2006.

After that, the company is planning to have five production lines for the aircraft, and is considering adding two more to cope with extra demand, with Asia being one possible site for one of these.

However, Bedek is also being careful not to expand its production too fast for its management capacity, and so Netz says any expansion to seven lines will not be until 2008 at the earliest. – *Peter Conway*

Taiwan closes ICAS

Taiwanese joint venture Inter-Continental Aircraft Services (ICAS), which was established in 2000 by the Taiwanese government together with maintenance company Air Asia, China Airlines, Evergreen Aviation Technologies (the maintenance unit of EVA Air) and aircraft manufacturer Aerospace Industrial Development Corp, has decided to terminate its freighter conversion activities and close company this month. ICAS offered cargo conversions for the Boeing 737 Classic, but failed to find customers.



China Postal Airlines operates B737-300 freighter.

The move leaves Aeronautical Engineers, Pemco and the Bedek Aviation division of Israel Aircraft Industries as the sole providers of B737-300/400 conversions.

China Postal Airlines earlier this year awarded a conversion contract to Bedek for three B737-300s.

Alcoa-SIE ready to take on China's market

Alcoa-SIE Cargo Conversions is in pursuit of the fast moving Asia Pacific market and is launching a product to grab a portion of the business.

"Today, we are focused on Asia because air cargo there is predicted to grow close to 10 percent," says Richard Gauvin, director of sales and marketing for Alcoa-SIE Cargo Conversions.

To do so, the company has joined forces with Structural Integrity Engineering, a Simi Valley, California-based company that has been providing engineering services to the aviation industry since 1981.

“Together, we are launching a product whereby we convert 757-200 aircraft to freight configuration Gauvin says. “We are currently meeting with a number of Chinese carriers that are expressing an interest in converted 757 aircraft. They are keeping an eye on our progress.”

Initially, the company marketed the idea by showing via computer dramatization how the 757-200 could easily be converted to become a cost-efficient high-capacity platform.

By developing optimal innovative solutions like 14Plus, the company is now capable of converting twin-engine 757s to enable them to provide a longer range, a larger payload, and significant operational savings over older freight carrying aircraft.

In essence, the 14Plus solution turns the stalwart B757-200s into affordable and highly reliable freighters. This, in turn, makes it cost-effective for carriers to modernize and upgrade their fleets.



The B757 conversion undertaken by Alcoa-SIE was expected to receive an STC last month.

“We have now completed the development phase and have just flown our first aircraft,” Gauvin says.

In its efforts, Alcoa-SIE Cargo Conversions utilises the services of Abbotsford, British Columbia based Cascade Aerospace, a company known for its aircraft maintenance and modification services. But now that Alcoa-SIE Cargo Conversions is ready to enter the after service market in Asia as a Maintenance Repair Organization (MRO), Gauvin reveals the company needs to partner with a similar firm in Asia.

Alcoa Aerospace already has operations in China with Alcoa Fastening Systems in Beijing, and Alcoa (Shanghai) Aluminum Products and Alcoa Fastening Systems in Shanghai.

“Being a business unit of Alcoa, we can access their infrastructure,” Gauvin says. “But we now plan to position equipment in China as the fleet there grows and requirements for service dictate. We look to Asia for further production of our capabilities.”

The company is also involved in India’s air freight market. “We are working on five freighter aircraft operated by Indian carriers right now,” he says. “We are in an expansion mode in India.”

Formed in 2003, Alcoa-SIE Cargo Conversions is an outgrowth of Alcoa - the world's leading producer of aluminum sheet, components and alloys for the aerospace industry. - *Karen Thuermer*

AD Aerospace to provide cargo monitoring on B747-LCF

AD Aerospace has been selected by Boeing to provide a video viewing system in the main deck cargo compartment of the forthcoming Boeing 747-400 LCF (Large Cargo Freighter). This will enable the crew to view the entire main deck cargo compartment from the flight deck.

The system comprises a series of environmentally protected cameras and LED illuminators, positioned within the main deck cargo area, linked via a camera interface unit to the Electronic Flight Bag (EFBs) used by the flight deck crew.

Each pilot will be able to individually select a group of cameras on their EFB display.

According to Mike Horne, managing director, AD Aerospace, video capability enables the flight crew of a freighter to view the cargo area without leaving their seats, especially important when, as in this case, the cargo hold is unpressurised and inaccessible during flight.

Guggenheim orders -400 combi-to-freighter conversions

US-based Guggenheim Aviation Partners has ordered two 747-400 Boeing Converted Freighter combi-to-freighter conversions. Both deliveries will take place in 2008, according to an agreement signed by Guggenheim and Boeing.

Boeing launched the Boeing Converted Freighter programme for passenger conversions in 2004. It was previously known as the 747-400 Special Freighter programme.



For the conversion, the 747-400 combi airplane receives a strengthened main-cabin floor, a full main deck lining and provisions for a new cargo-handling system with an upgraded flight deck.

The 747-400BCF has positions for 30 cargo pallets on the main deck and 32 LD-1 containers in the lower hold -- both comparable volumes to those of a new 747-400 Freighter.

"The combi-to-freighter conversion continues Guggenheim's focus and commitment to the 747 freighter market segment," said Guggenheim executive officer Stephen Rimmer.

A300 conversions take off in Asia

Quitting his job as director of sales for EADS-EFW in October to take up a new role as CEO of a truck trailer manufacturing company, Wolfgang Schmid joked that there was not much left for his successor, Gilbert Birke, to do. "Successor? What for? We are full!", he boasted.



Juergen Habermann

Nor was this boasting so wide off the mark. Juergen Habermann, EFW's vice president sales and customer support, confirms that the Dresden-based freighter conversion arm of Airbus, is sold out till the end of 2007, and only has a few slots left in 2008. And this despite expanding capacity from its current 14 aircraft a year, to 17 in 2006 and 20 in 2007.

A key reason for the boom is the one that EFW patiently outlined at air cargo conference after air cargo conference in the late 1990s and early 2000s – that with cargo traffic growing faster than passenger, a need would inexorably arise within Asia for feeder freighters.

That demand first manifested itself in the Middle East, at carriers such as Etihad, Emirates and Qatar Airways. Now it is spreading further east.

Habermann confirms that Korean Air have signed a contract for two A300-600 conversions with further options, to enter service in 2007.

Air India is also close to a contract to convert two A310s, while Japan Airlines has opted for buying new A300-600Fs from Airbus. Meanwhile, Air Macau is working through lessors to upgrade its four A300B4s to A300-600s: EFW already has a contract with one of those lessors, ILFC, and is hopeful of landing the other, AWAS.

The interest of lessors in both the A300-600 and EFW's other product of the moment, the A310-300, is another positive sign for the market. "We are getting a lot of requests from companies who want to get into the A300 and A310 freighter

market because they see a big potential in it,” says Habermann.

Many of these are buying aircraft with the intention of leasing them for a year or two for passenger use, and then converting them to freighters.

Within Asia, there are plenty of candidates, with Habermann pointing to the fleets of AWAS, China Airlines and Korean Air as being potential conversion candidates.

China is also a key market being targeted by EFW, but with more mixed results. A problem here is China’s rule restricting the import of aircraft more than 15 years old. That makes the best conversion candidates the 10 A300-600s in China Eastern’s fleet, and the six in China Southern’s.



Emirates is converting three A310s to freighter at EADS-EFW in Dresden.

EFW is still hopeful of converting the former, but the China Southern aircraft seem to have slipped its grasp, with the carrier rumoured to be working on its own solution with Flight Structures International.

Meanwhile, FedEx continues to be an extremely keen buyer of both A310s and A300s. In September, the integrator took delivery of its 100th Airbus freighter, a tally made up of 36 production freighters, 49 A310-200s, of which 17 were converted by EFW at Dresden, eight A300-600s conversions and seven A310-300s.

EFW continues to convert the latter two types for FedEx at the rate of eight to ten a year, business that Habermann says will last till at least 2010. “It will not be so long till we do the 100th conversion for them,” he jokes.

Even the high oil price is not dampening demand for Airbus conversions, Habermann insists.

“It is making carriers look at replacing more fuel-inefficient aircraft such as the

A300B4," he says. "If anything, I would say the high oil price is increasing demand. Airline operators have now woken up to these aircraft, and they all want them at once." – *Peter Conway*

SASCO rapidly expands PTF activities

Singapore Technologies Aerospace and its subsidiary ST Aviation Services Company Pte Ltd (SASCO), which specialises in modification services for narrow-body and wide-body aircraft, is rapidly expanding its activities in the passenger to freighter (PTF) conversion market.

"We have done conversions in the US at ST Mobile Aerospace Engineering (MAE) and in Singapore -- where we have converted the B727s, B757s, DC10s and MD-11s," says Audrey Tan, head corporate communications, ST Aerospace.

According to Ms Tan, the company has 48 firm MD-11 conversion orders for UPS, FedEx Express, Chinese Eastern Airlines and other customers and to date, it has re-delivered 27 aircraft with four currently in conversion. SASCO, which operates from Singapore's Changi and Paya Lebar airports, works closely with Boeing on the PTF services for DC-10 and MD-11s. In addition, the company is involved in the conversion of the B757-200 Special Freighter (SF).



Installation of large cargo door on B757-200.

On the 757 conversion, Ms Tan says SASCO completed conversion work on 17 of 34 B757-200 aircraft for DHL in 2004. The 757-200 Supplemental Type Certificate (STC) was developed by ST Aerospace and the Bedek Aviation Group of Israel Aircraft Industries for the DHL conversion programme by Boeing. Since then, ST Aerospace and IAI have again teamed to develop their own STC for variants of the 757 freighter.

Despite the current dip in the global airline industry, Ms Tan points to the stellar performance of the international integrators such as DHL, UPS and FedEx.

"They are doing well," she says, "just like those related to airlines, such as Lufthansa Cargo,

and the existing and new Chinese airlines. The freight requirement will improve significantly with the recovery of the global economy and with the rapid growth of the China market.

Banking on that growth, ST Aerospace earlier this year established Shanghai Technologies Aerospace Company (STARCO), a joint venture with China Eastern Airlines, which provides maintenance and modification services for both Boeing and Airbus aircraft types from its current facility at Hongqiao International Airport (Shanghai).

Aside from that facility, STARCO is preparing to build a hangar at Shanghai Pudong International Airport by 2007, which will be capable of simultaneously accommodating an Airbus 380, two wide-body and two narrow-body aircraft.



China Air Cargo MD-11 Freighter converted at SASCO.

Separately, ST Aerospace in March this year launched a new narrow-body hangar for its facility at Seletar Airport (Singapore), which is capable of accommodating two narrow-body aircraft simultaneously. Also, SASCO at its Changi (Singapore) location, has started construction of a wide-body hangar that is targeted to be ready in 2006.

Pemco predicts potential for niche conversions in Asia

Kevin Casey, vice president of commercial business development for Dothan, Alabama-based Pemco World Air Services is clear about one thing: "Asia is ripe for converted aircraft," he says.

The reason: Asia continues to gain in importance as a manufacturing hot bed for both low-cost and increasingly higher tech products. By Asia, he is referring to both China and India.

“As a result of the need for higher tech components, air freight will be increasingly in demand,” he says.



Kevin Casey

“Not only are such shipments temperature sensitive, whereby shipping via ocean is not viable; many are time sensitive. As a result there is a tremendous build up for dedicated cargo aircraft. There are just not enough in the market.”

Of the new freighters that will go into these markets, Casey estimates that four out of five will be converted aircraft.

“The others will be factory-built from the OEMs,” he says. “India, China and surrounding Southeast Asia and the Pacific region are going to take a huge number of converted aircraft. That is why Pemco is concentrating on developing its business there.”

Pemco World Air Services has a very successful track record of performing heavy maintenance and major modifications on both wide and narrow body aircraft for operators around the world.

Plus, thanks to its well-trained maintenance teams and large number of maintenance bays, the company can handle drop-in repairs and aircraft requiring short turnaround times quickly and efficiently.

Currently, Pemco has personnel based in Macau, Mainland China, India and is now looking at Australia.

“We are putting our money where our mouth is, since Pemco already has 10 or 12 aircraft operating in China,” he says.

“Pemco has a regional technical support office in Mainland China. We are setting up a regional spare parts warehousing operations also in Mainland China. The reason they are there is this the largest concentration of 737 freighters. Our focus is on narrow body aircraft.”

For nearly a year, Casey observes that cargo carriers have been primarily focused on 747-400, but he expects that to change.



Pemco's conversion of 737-300-400s include China Southern 737QC operated by China Post.

“The reason for the focus on 747-400s is largely due to the bandwagon effect,” he comments. “However, many people have been boxed out of capacity, which will probably save them in four or five years when that capacity shifts and there becomes a glut.

“The niche players will find they have a healthy relationship between volume of cargo capacity and payload potential and demand for that payload. That has traditionally been Pemco’s niche.”

Currently, Pemco is approaching nearly 300 aircraft conversions with 20 different models.

Currently the company is converting 737-300s and now 737-400s. “The 737-400 conversion was recently announced with Alaska Airlines,” he says. - *Karen Thuermer*

Bedek to convert six EVA Combis into freighters

Taiwan's EVA Airways has signed a contract with Israel Aircraft Industries Ltd. (IAI) Bedek Aviation Group to convert up to six Boeing 747-400 combi aircraft into special freighters.

Conversion work on the first EVA Airways aircraft is scheduled to begin in the second half of 2007.

The contract calls for the initial conversion of four aircraft with an option for two additional aircraft. Value of the contract for the full six aircraft conversions is approximately US\$100 million.

EVA Airways operate both passenger aircraft and freighters including 747, 757, 777, MD-11 and A330.

David Arzi, IAI corporate vice president and general manager of Bedek Aviation Group, said: "Asia's rapid economic growth is resulting in an increased demand for cargo aircraft. Bedek is ready to meet that demand with proven, cost-effective conversions and is expanding its conversion activities in Asia. We are already producing kits for Boeing 767 conversions in China and soon will be opening our first conversion site in the region."



B767s are the future for Aeronavali

B767-200s and -300s have become the main freighter conversion focus for Aeronavali, with the ending of demand for its DC-10 programme.

The Venice, Italy-based company has its own licence from Boeing for the conversion of 767-200s and is in discussions with the US manufacturer about 767-300s.

Giacomo Perfetto, spokesman for Aeronavali, stresses the importance of this link with the manufacturer. "We are not offering these conversions under an STC: it is an OEM solution," he says.

The company got its launch customer for the 767-200 in January in the shape of US lessor Cargo Aircraft Management, which is converting ten. The first will arrive at Aeronavali in November. Two of the fleet have already been placed with Tampa. Perfetto is also confident of a strong Asian market for 767 freighters. "All the analysts say it will be a good aircraft for the region," he says.

The company also continues to carry out MD-11 conversions for Boeing, but as a subcontractor rather than a licence holder. "We don't market MD-11 conversions in our own right, and so I can't speculate on the future of this programme", Perfetto

says.

However, he confirms that Aeronavali still expects to be doing MD-11s for some time to come. A key customer at present is Alitalia, which is converting five MD-11 combis to freighters, the second of which is currently undergoing work in Venice.



US-based Gemini Air Cargo operates MD-10 freighter converted by Aeronavali.

The MD-10 programme, for which FedEx is the sole customer, will also keep Aeronavali busy until at least 2010.

This involves both putting new advanced common flight decks on existing DC-10 freighters to bring them up to MD-11 standards of avionics, and converting DC-10 passenger planes to MD-10 freighters.

Having done over 30 passenger to MD-10 freighter conversions, Aeronavali now has just five to go, but has over 30 existing DC-10 freighters still to upgrade for FedEx.

Aeronavali's other programme is a freighter conversion for the ATR passenger plane, for which it is the OEM. Launched in 2003, the programme has so far received minimal support, however. Two 8.6 tonne ATR-72s are currently being converted for Sweden's West Air, adding to six previously delivered to Farnair. A single ATR-42 has so far been converted – for Northern Air Cargo of Alaska.

Perfetto also says there is another as yet undisclosed ATR conversion customer for two -72s with two options, but admits Aeronavali expects demand mainly from Europe and Asia for the aircraft. "We are not targetting Asian customers, as we don't think there is a market for this size of regional aircraft there," he says. – *Peter Conway*

Goodrich holds lead in niche conversions

Goodrich Cargo Systems takes the global cargo conversion market seriously. In fact, to better focus on specific customers Goodrich has adjusted its organization by global region.

With cargo volumes escalating especially in Asia, Goodrich has established MRO facilities in Singapore and partnered with firms in Hong Kong and Mainland China to better focus on the customer needs and support for their cargo systems. Goodrich also has positioned MRO facilities in Monroe, North Carolina to service the Americas, as well as Coventry, England to serve Europe.

“Goodrich has also established regional spares availability for efficient responsiveness,” says Tim Dumbauld, vice president & general manager of Goodrich Cargo Systems.

For example, Goodrich has established a joint venture with TAECO, a subsidiary of Hong Kong-based HAECO and is focused on serving regional customers for their aftermarket needs.



Goodrich executives believe strongly that they are on the right track. In fact, Goodrich Cargo Systems is currently the market leader providing both lower lobe and main deck Cargo Loading Systems (CLS) for the 747-400F/ERF, 767-300GMF, 777, A300-600F, A340-500/600, and A380 original equipment platforms.

Additionally, Goodrich supplies systems to the aftermarket such as the MD-11 special freighter conversion, A310 and the 747 conversion.

“Having working relationships with customers greatly enhances the process of solving for their operational needs whether it be selecting the right configuration on their new platforms, upgrading their existing fleet, or planning for future passenger to freighter conversions,” says Dumbauld.

Since the cost of fuel is at an all time high, Goodrich continues to focus on reducing aircraft weight.

“This is particularly evident for the 747-400F where the Goodrich system is over

1,300 pounds lighter than the competition,” he notes. “This will mean decreased fuel burn, increased payload, and/or increased aircraft range. By utilising common LRU’s, Goodrich offers to upgrade airline’s existing systems by replacing heavy, less reliable systems saving significant operating costs.”

Goodrich is well aware of the high demand for freighters in the Asian and Middle Eastern markets - two regions where approximately 75 percent of the supply will come from converted passenger aircraft.

“In addition to supplying the CLS directly to Boeing and Airbus for new aircraft, Goodrich also applies these technologies to conversions,” Dumbauld adds.

Primarily focused on the large and medium sized wide-body market segment, Goodrich has provided its cargo loading systems for the A310, MD11 and 747 platforms. - *Karen Thuermer*

Precision Conversions ramps up converted 757s

Executives with Precision Conversions are drumming up business in the Asian market.

In May 2004, the Beaverton, Oregon-based company charged with developing, integrating and marketing aircraft conversions for the air transport industry, signed a contract with International Lease Finance Corp to convert two Boeing 757-200s from passenger to freighter configurations.

The two aircraft had been operating as passenger planes under a lease agreement between ILFC and Shanghai Airlines. After being converted at Precision Conversion’s operation in Everett, Washington, the planes were returned to Shanghai Airlines in early 2005.

Gary Warner, vice president of Precision’s corporate development, points out that Shanghai Airlines, which is doing a joint venture with EVA Air, called Shanghai International Cargo, is ramping up its fleet of 757s. In the meantime, Precision has been visiting other airlines and major groups in the region.

“We believe that once we have that first 757-200BCF operated by Shanghai Airlines it will prove two things: first the performance and quality of the conversion and how we support the product once we deliver it,” Warner points out.

Precision Conversions began work on its first prototype for the 757-200 more than three years ago.

The project became delayed to obtain a supplemental type certificate (STC). But the delay could have been a blessing in disguise, as a continuing rise in fuel costs

created a strong case for converting the aircraft from a passenger to cargo configuration since that aircraft is more fuel efficient when fuel costs reach \$1.87.

TNT operates converted 757-200PCF.

Precision Conversions selected the Boeing 757 for freighter conversions because it is a reliable and flight efficient aircraft. The two man crew, fuel efficiency, range and high altitude/hot climate performance of the 757 makes it a solid replacement for the older 727 and DC8 fleets.

These qualities make it a workhorse air freighter, which is already predicted to grow in popularity with forecasts of potentially 200 conversions in the years ahead.

As part of its business, Precision Conversions provides its customers everything from manuals, training and spares to Aircraft On Ground (AOG) service. Support is available 24/7.

At the moment all of Precision Conversion's work is done in the US.

"But it has become very clear to us from our business in China that long-term relationships need to be developed," Warner says. "As the fleet grows in China, we can make decisions about having in-country service."

For now, all conversions are done in Everett, Washington at BF Goodrich Technical Services.

All engineering is done by Precision Conversions in Escondido, California. And the company maintains its sales team in Greensboro, North Carolina.

While Precision Conversions is not yet involved in Middle East markets, Warner believes that market holds potential.

"The good thing about the Middle East is you have long thin routes, which are perfect for 757s," he says. - *Karen Thuermer*

BAE Systems close to relaunch BAe 146 freighter conversion

UK-based BAE Systems is expected to relaunch the cargo conversion programme for the BAe 146, while the company is also preparing a freighter modification for the J41 turboprop.

A company spokesman said that a bid process was underway with several plants,

which could undertake the 146 conversions under a BAE-owned supplemental type certificate (STC).



"At the moment we have two to three potential centres and we hope to be able to make a decision to relaunch by the end of the year," the spokesman said.

As for the J41 turboprop, the spokesman noted that the aircraft would make "a good freighter in the 3.5-tonne payload category."

ABC adds 3rd freighter to fleet

AirBridge Cargo (ABC) has taken delivery of a third B747 freighter that will enable it to add four weekly flights between Europe and Shanghai via its hub in Krasnoyarsk.

The 747-300SF features a 30-pallet main deck and is one of three of its kind to be converted to freighters, ABC said.

The airline was awarded frequency increases to Shanghai and Beijing in recent negotiations as well the right to add Guangzhou, Nanjing, Hong Kong and Moscow on westbound flights.

TNT buys two more 737-300SFs

TNT Express has signed a contract with GECAS for two additional 737-300SFs, bringing the total number of 737s in its fleet to nine.

The new aircraft will be converted from passenger to freighter configuration by the Bedek Aviation Services division of Israel Aircraft Industries.

TNT will introduce the aircraft to its European air network in August and December 2006.