

Northwest to launch A319M5 & PW6000

Rumours are circulating that Northwest will soon launch the A319M5, a shortened 115-seat version of the A319, with an order for up to 250 aircraft. The airline will also return to its long-term engine supplier and specify the PW6000 engine.



Northwest's imminent A319M5 order will alter the DC-9 market irrevocably and possibly decide the 717's fate. Northwest has returned to Pratt & Whitney for engines, putting it back in the narrowbody market.

Northwest will soon end years of speculation about what strategy it will take with its massive ageing DC-9 fleet with a launch order for up to 250 A319M5s. This aircraft is a 115-seat shortened version of the A319.

Airbus and Avic recently cancelled the 95 and 115-seat AE316/7. The AE316/7 was being studied as a possible launch, and the possibility of the A319M5 was seen as a potential threat. The recent decision to scrap the AE316/7 was apparently made on the basis that there is a limited market for this size of aircraft.

Northwest's order confirms the need for aircraft in the 115-seat range and has prevented the 717 from gaining a vital and prestigious contract. Other contenders for this market are the possible stretch of the Do 928Jet and IPTN 2130-200, each of which are several years from programme launch.

Northwest's launch extends the A320 family by another type and launches a new engine: the PW6000. The A319M5 will have airframe commonality and cross-crew qualification (CCQ) with all other Airbus fly-by-wire types. The launch of the A319M5 will be particularly good for Airbus since it broadens the range of aircraft sizes which use CCQ. Airbus has used CCQ to great advantage and extending its use to another aircraft will strengthen any airline's case for having an all-Airbus fleet.

The launch of the PW6000 is also particularly good news for Pratt & Whitney. The deal puts Pratt & Whitney (P&W) back in the narrowbody market with the first small turbofan it has launched for 20 years.

The PW6000 was being developed to deliver 16,000-23,000lb thrust for several proposed 100-seat aircraft. P&W has been Northwest's major engine supplier for many years, but the airline shocked the market when it selected the CFM56 over the V.2500 for its A320.

The PW6000 has a 65 inch fan and its core powers the PW8000 geared fan engine which has been launched for aircraft in the A320 family size range. The PW8000 would offer substantial reductions in noise and noxious emissions, fuel burn and maintenance costs. The PW6000's launch to power the A319M5 is now likely to generate speculation that Airbus will offer the PW8000 for the A319/20/21.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Aeroflot & Transaero announce results

Aeroflot carried 2.038 million passengers in the first six months of 1998, a 24% increase on the previous year. Domestic traffic for the six month period grew by 290% over the year, illustrating the rapid growth in domestic Russian air transport. Freight and cargo also increased by 24% over the year with 190% growth for the domestic portion of traffic.

At the 1st July 1998, Aeroflot's fleet stood at 115 aircraft, including one 777, two 767s, two 737-400s and 10 A310s. Most of the rest of its fleet are Il-86s, Il-62s, 33 Tu-154s and Tu-134s. It now has 20 Il-96M/Ts on order.

In the first six months of 1998 the fleet had an average utilisation of 5.5 flight hours / day, which is equal to about 1,800 flight hours / year. The 767s, however, achieved an impressive rate of 15.3 hours / day or 5,600 hours / year.

Transaero meanwhile announced that it has accumulated losses of \$70 million. This was rejected by shareholders at the annual general meeting and a commission was appointed to investigate the company's affairs.

