

AIRLINE BUSINESS DAILY

BRINGING YOU THE NEWS FROM THE ALTA LATIN AMERICAN AIRLINE LEADERS FORUM AT CANCUN – 29 NOVEMBER

ALTA Daily sponsored by CFM International

Brazil's new order sweeps in

THE POSSIBILITY THAT VARIG may soon receive its air operating certificate (AOC) and restore some of its routes will not reverse the sea change that has already taken place in Brazil's airline sector. TAM has replaced Varig as Brazil's leading carrier, both on domestic and international routes, with a market share of 51% and 55% respectively, while low-cost Gol has grown rapidly to grab 37% of the home market.

Under a deal hammered out between new Varig, Brazil's bankruptcy court, and the two agencies that regulate commercial aviation, the airline hopes to obtain its AOC in the first week of December. Delays in obtaining the AOC have frustrated Varig because it cannot order new aircraft without it. It is currently operating on old Varig's AOC.

This has complicated Varig's efforts to revive dormant routes that Brazil's civil aviation agency ANAC threatens to reallocate because Varig is not using them.

The agreed deadlines for Varig to revive dormant routes are mid-December for domestic routes and mid-February for international.

A year ago Varig and TAM were Brazil's only international carriers. Now there are five. In the past several months TAM, Gol, BRA, and Oceanair have gained almost 100 domestic routes. BRA



has become a significant overseas player operating Boeing 767s on its new routes to Lisbon, Madrid, and Milan.

Leadership in Brazil has passed to a new generation of airlines that are listed on overseas capital markets, use the internet for ticket distribution and have been growing as fast as they can expand their fleets.

But the new order are not having it all their own way. A work-to-rule by air traffic controllers since late October has caused severe delays and flight cancellations. The impact of the action has led Gol to slightly lower its revenue expectations for this year and trim its operating profit margin from 26-28% to 23%. ■

▶ ALTA Forum raises the bar

With more than 400 delegates and an array of senior figures from across airline and government ranks, the Latin American Airline Leaders Forum has risen in just three years to become the most important gathering for the region's air transport industry.

According to ALTA executive director Alex de Gunten, the event is a sell-out as demand for places has been so strong.

There are some 50 airlines present here in Cancun with some 35 represented either by their chief executive, president or board chairman. In addition, for the first time, ALTA has invited directors of civil aviation from several countries, with 12 confirmed just prior to the event.

ALTA has become increasingly proactive in representing the interests of Latin carriers at national level. "There is still a lot of misinformation about Latin America and this event has an important role in highlighting the positive things going on here, while at the same time noting that we still have a long way to go," says de Gunten.

Keynote speakers at this week's forum include former US Transportation Department secretary Norman Mineta, who will discuss the future of US aviation policy, and Iberia's chief executive Fernando Conte.

Conference Agenda
see pages 6 and 7



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ALTA's man with a mission

OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS Latin America's Airline Association ALTA has been transformed, growing in confidence and effectiveness to give the region's dynamic airline industry a body that is working at all levels in their best interests.

For Alex de Gunten, the former Orbitz Latin America, LANChile and Canadian Airlines executive, it has been a three-year mission given to him by his board, with their support, to make ALTA relevant once more. "The board wanted change," he says. "We are all very much focused on results."

In this time ALTA membership has risen from 16 to 33 carriers. Only one carrier has left, and that was because it went bust. Membership has also been expanded to allow affiliate members, the association has obtained a new name and brand to represent its new focus, and it has recruited



Alex de Gunten – growing ALTA

a team of industry experts to run its expanding programme of projects, says de Gunten.

Moreover, ALTA is one of the few regional airline associations to include low-cost carriers in its membership, with Gol, Click and Volaris all members. In addition, it is now a broader-based organisation with carriers from the Caribbean like Air Jamaica

and Caribbean Star joining.

ALTA continues to lobby those countries that are over taxing the industry and still view airlines as a form of cash cow. "Some still haven't recognised the value of the industry in terms of its economic development and tourism benefits," says de Gunten.

The region is still highly fragmented which puts up barriers to carriers becoming more efficient, he says. However, there are some carriers, such as Copa, LAN and the Synergy Group, that have been good at adapting to the restrictive regulatory environment. One of ALTA's main efforts is in trying to persuade governments to really work on integrating the region's air transport industry.

While the region has had its fair share of struggling carriers, traffic for ALTA members has grown by 12% over the past two years, and there is in fact a serious shortfall

in international capacity, says de Gunten.

At the practical level, ALTA has been active in bringing carriers together to help save money by joint fuel negotiations, says de Gunten. The association is also working in other areas like maintenance to assist carriers with joint spare parts negotiations. "These initiatives are producing real cash benefits already," he says. ■

► COPA DOUBLES

Copa is probably the biggest beneficiary of a new accord between Panama and Argentina to increase weekly flights from 7 to 14.

Because of its growing use of sixth freedoms, Copa will be able to feed traffic behind or beyond its Panama City hub into twice as many Buenos Aires flights.

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Latins challenge the northern raiders

US CARRIERS CONTINUE TO be dominant on international routes into Latin America and the Caribbean, but the mix of US carriers is shifting, with more low-cost carriers making incursions, especially to Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

While the hold on international traffic by US carriers is not likely fall steeply in the foreseeable future, indigenous carriers, gaining increasing financial strength, growing regional networks and new aircraft, could begin to change the balance.

Looking forward, Michael Bell, partner of Spencer Stuart's global aviation practice, told AvGroup's International Airline CEO Conference earlier this year, that five carriers "in the game" are LAN, Grupo TACA, Copa Airlines, Gol and TAM Brazilian Airlines. Common denominators are public ownership, financial transparency, home market dominance, new fleets and stable management.

James Li, managing director and head of Stanford Investment Banking, says the five have focused strategies to achieve scale, giving them "a first class ticket to strategic growth". He notes the region is second only to China in terms of forecast traffic growth.

American Airlines, with its regional partner American Eagle, remains the powerhouse in the region, serving 148 markets with more than 3,500 weekly nonstop flights, as of November 2006, according to Velocity Group data. American's seat capacity in South and Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean is almost double any other carrier. Its capacity in the region, though, fell 2.5% for the first 10 months of 2005, with traffic rising 2.5%.

TAM, growing smartly internationally with the near-demise of former Brazilian mainstay Varig, operates more weekly flights in more markets than American, but its route system is still primarily Brazilian with just half a dozen international destinations served directly and six others served

through TAM Mercosur. However, TAM is poised to increase its international market share considerably (*see below*).

Continental, with its regional partner ExpressJet, is currently the second largest US presence, with a combined 1,531 weekly nonstop flights in 96 markets in November. With a wide pattern of service from its Newark and Houston hubs, Continental was a pioneer in transborder markets to Mexico. ExpressJet serves more than 30 destinations from Houston and more recently Los Angeles, using Embraer ERJ-145XR aircraft. Continental has continued to increase capacity to Latin America this year; its traffic was up 17.9% through October on a 13.4% rise in capacity.

Largest capacity gains are coming from Delta, which is set on becoming "the second largest US player in the region", according to chief operating officer Jim Whitehurst.

Delta now plans a small hub in Los Angeles with flights to nine destinations in Mexico and two in Central America, many to operate with Delta Connection regional jets.

US Airways has pulled back its Latin services considerably, but

it remains stronger in the region than United, which has concentrated most services from Washington Dulles. Other US carriers expanding significantly, particularly to Mexican and Caribbean destinations, include JetBlue, Frontier, Alaska and Spirit Airlines. Air Canada also has been responsible for high double-digit growth into Central and South America from Canada recently, according to Douglas Abbey, partner with Velocity Group.

An interesting recent development are efforts by Aeromexico and Mexicana to fly to secondary US cities from secondary Mexican destinations. ■



TAM prepares push into overseas markets

A cascade of route opportunities and new aircraft orders are coming together for Brazil's TAM as the carrier prepares for the most aggressive international expansion in its history.

Last week the airline obtained

the official approval from Italy's civil aviation agency to begin daily flights to Milan. This comes just weeks after the Italian and Brazilian governments agreed to allow more flights between the two countries.

"The flight to Italy will strengthen our international network because it is a destination that attracts both business and leisure passengers, and also is another entrance to Europe," according to Marco Antonio Bologna, chief

executive officer of TAM.

TAM could begin flying between São Paulo and Milan in the first half of 2007 with Airbus A330s. It will be its third destination in Europe. It already has a twice daily Paris service that will rise to three times daily from mid-January and a daily flight to London Heathrow.

The carrier announced its first Boeing order in early November to boost its international expansion. The first of four General Electric GE90-powered 777-300ERs will be delivered in mid-2008. It has another four on option.

TAM is also expanding its 60+ strong Airbus fleet. In mid-November it signed a firm contract with Airbus covering 15 A319s, 16 A320s and six A330s for delivery through 2010. ■



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ALTA LATIN AMERICAN AIRLINE LEADERS FORUM

Fiesta Americana Grand Coral Beach Resort & Spa – November 29-December 1, 2006 Cancun, Mexico

Dress for the conference is business casual

Wednesday, November 29

- 4:00 – 7:00pm** **Registration** – Fiesta Americana Foyer Special Registration Area
- 6:30 – 8:30pm** **Welcome Reception: "A Taste of Mexico"** – *Sponsored by Airbus*
Sunset Terrace (outside)

Entertainment sponsored by Abogados Sierra y Vazquez

Thursday, November 30

- 7:00 – 9:00am** **Morning Registration** – Ballroom Foyer
Exhibit Area opens at 8:30am
Chief executive Meeting Room – *Sponsored by Lufthansa Technik*
- Morning coffee** – *Sponsored by ASUR*
- 9:00 – 9:15** **Welcome** – ALTA Executive Director Alex de Gunten
- 9:15 – 9:40** **Latin American & Caribbean Regional Overview**
ALTA President & Copa Airlines chief executive Pedro Heilbron
- 9:40 – 10:10** **Wall Street's View of the Airlines** – North and South America
Merrill Lynch aviation analyst Mike Linenberg
- 10:10 – 10:30** **How Can Airlines & Airports Best Work Together**
Member of World Governing Board ACI and President ACI-LAC Hector Navarrete
- 10:30 – 10:50** **Break** – *Sponsored by Unisys*
- 10:50 – 11:20** **The New Iberia & Its Vision For Latin America & Caribbean**
Iberia chief executive Fernando Conte



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of the Latin American
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Thursday, November 30**continued****11:20 – 11:50****CAM Single Regulatory Entity**

TACA chief executive Roberto Kriete

12:00 – 1:30**Lunch Keynote: The Future of U.S. Aviation Policy**

Former U.S. DOT Secretary Norman Mineta

*Sponsored by Boeing***1:30 – 2:00****Life After Chapter 11**

Avianca chief executive Fabio Villegas

2:00 – 3:15**Progress In Brazilian Aviation**

■ TAM chief executive Marco Antonio Bologna

■ GOL chief executive Constantino de Oliveira Jr.

■ Ocean Air chief executive German Efromovich

■ Varig Log President Joao Luis Bernes de Sousa

3:15 – 3:45**Break – Sponsored by Unisys****3:45 – 5:00****The Role of Government in the Airline Industry**

Moderator: Enrique Borgo Bustamante, El Salvador Ambassador to Spain and Former Vice-President, El Salvador

■ Panama Director of Civil Aviation Eustacio Fabrega

■ IATA Senior VP Member & Government Relations Thomas Windmuller

■ Brazil Director of National Civil Aviation (ANAC) Denise Maria Ayres de Abreu

■ Aeropostal chief executive Nelson Ramiz

7:00 – 8:00**Cocktail Reception – Sponsored by SITA****8:00 – 10:00****ALTA Awards Dinner – Sponsored by Lufthansa Systems***Master of Ceremonies, Michael Bell, Spencer Stuart**The Federico Bloch Award sponsored by AWAS**The Rolim Amaro Award sponsored by TAM**Entertainment sponsored by GECAS***EMBRAER****Lufthansa Systems**

Moving Your Business Ahead

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► BOLIVIA LIMITS FUEL SUBSIDIES TO DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

BOLIVIA'S GOVERNMENT IS to restrict its controversial programme of fuel subsidies for the nation's airlines to domestic operations only.

The decision to end the scheme for international operations follows long-running protests from the USA and Brazil, which claim that the Bolivian subsidies distorts competition on routes to and from Bolivia.

The subsidised price of around \$0.34 per litre will now be available only for domestic flights.

International flights will have to use market prices, which are more than double the subsidised rates at Santa Cruz.

Bolivian flag-carrier LAB warned last week that it would have to cancel flights if the subsidy was eliminated.

Only domestically refined aviation fuel can be used for the subsidised supply. Earlier this month a reduced supply of this cheap domestic aviation fuel, coupled with increased demand, led to the cancellation of a number of international flights.

Meanwhile, troubled LAB, which was grounded earlier this year, is planning to review its fleet of ageing Boeing 727s with 737s and 757s, enabling it to restart some long-haul services. ■

► SPIRIT TO ENTER SOUTH AMERICA WITH CARACAS SERVICE



SPIRIT AIRLINES IS PLANNING to introduce nonstop flights from its Fort Lauderdale, Florida hub to Caracas, Venezuela, marking the low-cost carrier's foray into the South American market.

The airline has filed an appli-

cation with the US DOT for rights to serve the route seven times per week with Airbus A319 aircraft. It wants to launch the service by the beginning of April.

"Spirit's service will enhance competition in the US-Venezuela travel market, and will offer con-

sumers a new, low-fare option," says the airline in its filing.

Spirit has been rapidly growing its operations in the Caribbean and Latin America. However, Caracas is the first South American destination unveiled by the carrier. ■

► CARIBBEAN STAR, LIAT VOW NOT TO IMPEDE UNIONS AT NEW AIRLINE

A NEW CARIBBEAN INTER-island carrier that is to be created by combining the best assets of Caribbean Star Airlines and Liat will welcome union representation for its staff.

"[Liat chief executive] Mark Darby and I would like to make it absolutely clear that staff selected

to work for the new company will have the right to seek union representation if they so choose based on those rights afforded to them under the law," says Skip Barnette, chief executive of Caribbean Star and its San Juan-hubbed sister Caribbean Sun.

Barnette's comments come a

little over a week after Antigua and Barbuda prime minister Baldwin Spencer warned that if management adopt a no-union policy, it could jeopardise the merger.

Meanwhile, negotiations towards forming the new airline are proceeding smoothly, according to Darby and Barnette. ■

► inbrief

Five make Pluna shortlist

Only five of the 14 parties that expressed an interest in Pluna made qualifying bids, but Uruguay's government still plans to complete its sale of a 49% stake by Christmas. Carlos Galcerán, Pluna's vice-president, says bids are being evaluated both in terms of price and each bidder's plans for developing the airline.

► BWIA TO RETURN A340S TO LESSORS

BWIA WEST INDIES AIRWAYS IS preparing to return its two Airbus A340s to their lessors before the end of March.

A BWIA spokeswoman confirms that "both aircraft will be returned". The move follows an announcement that BWIA's service to London Heathrow – which from January is to be assumed by its successor Caribbean Airlines – will stop on 27 March.

In its place, Caribbean will codeshare on British Airways' newly unveiled thrice-weekly service to Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago via Barbados. The deal saw BWIA sell its three slot pairs at Heathrow to BA.

According to ATI sister product ACAS, BWIA leases a single A340-300 from AerCap and another from International Lease Finance (ILFC). ■

► inbrief

Hong Kong-Mexico agreement

Hong Kong and Mexico have signed their first air services agreement which they hope will lead to regular flights between the two sides. The Hong Kong Government says in a statement that the air services agreement was signed on 22 November. Hong Kong has now signed 57 bilateral accords with foreign aviation partners.

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ALTA SPONSOR, GRUPO Aeroportuario del Sureste (ASUR), is a privatised Mexican airport operator and will have already made an impact on ALTA delegates as it is the operator of Cancun Airport.

ASUR was established in 1998 as part of the Mexican govern-

ment's plans to privatise its state-run airports and now administers and operates nine airports in the southeast region of Mexico, including Cancun, which is Latin America's busiest international airport.

Currently the group serves approximately 14 million passen-

gers each year and in October saw a total of 942,508 passengers, domestic and international, on scheduled flights non-transit flights pass through the nine airports, an increase of 20% over October 2005.

ASUR is highly committed to foster the development of the in-

dustry within the region through different initiatives that include route development and the construction of the "state of the art" Terminal 3 at Cancun.

"We are more than delighted to have the opportunity to meet all our Latin American partners and customers at this event which allows all of us involved to feel the pulse of the industry as well as to foresee the future," says Federico Zamudio Breceda, route development manager.

As part of its development plans ASUR is seeking a go-ahead from the Mexican Government to construct and operate a new airport on Mexico's Mayan Riviera in the resort region south of Cancun. No reply has yet been received from the Government but "we are hopeful that it will respond favourably to this request," says Breceda. ■



Cancun Airport is a success story for ALTA sponsor ASUR

▶ SITA PLANS INCREASED AUTOMATION

"ALTA is an important event for us," says Olivier Layly, SITA's regional vice-president for Latin America, "and we are proud to be a part of the conference again."

"ALTA is a great opportunity because our customers are here, and potential new customers also, we are here to discuss options and solutions as to how we can better assist them in the future," says Layly.

SITA sees the automation processes of airports in the region as a high priority in order to help handle the growing number of passengers and is considering introducing support for its OnAir in-flight mobile communications service in 2008 or 2009.

SITA is a service provider of IT business solutions and communications services to the air transport industry and manages complex communication solutions for its air transport, government and GDS customers over the world's most extensive communication network, which is complemented by consultancy in the design, deployment and integration of communication on services.

Word of the law

WITH MORE THAN 20 YEARS' experience in the Latin American market, legal firm White and Case has helped structure and execute more than \$70 billion in aircraft, equipment and facility finance transactions over the past decade.

The firm comes to ALTA as a sponsor with a strong reputation in the region. Back in 1991, it was the first non-Mexican firm to gain authorisation from the Government to establish an office in the country. It expanded throughout Latin America with offices in São

Paulo and Monterrey.

White & Case is a conglomerate of more than 1,900 lawyers worldwide and is able to help with leasing, asset-based financial structures and structured financial transactions. It has been involved with the cross-border market for equipment and facility financing.

Here at ALTA White & Case will be offering guidance on a range of capital equipment and facility financings, particularly with reference to aero engines and simulators. ■

AIRLINE BUSINESS DAILY

PUBLISHED BY AIRLINE BUSINESS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH AEROCOMM

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Sponsored by CFM International

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Pixel Press
Cancun

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