Comair places $210 million LEAP-1B engine order

- First African carrier to announce order for the LEAP/737 MAX
- New aircraft support fleet renewal strategy
- Deliveries scheduled between 2019 and 2021

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — South Africa’s private domestic airline operator, JSE-listed Comair Limited, today announced an order for LEAP-1B engines to power eight Boeing 737 MAX 8s, making Comair the first African airline operator to order the new 737 MAX.

The LEAP-1B is the sole powerplant for the Boeing 737 MAX schedule to go into production in 2017. This engine order, which is valued at $210 million U.S. at list price, supports Comair’s long-term objective of investing in future technology to ensure continuous sustainability.

“This investment in Comair’s fleet upgrade is fundamental to its business strategy of consistently improving customer service and value, while ensuring a sustainable airline,” said Erik Venter, CEO of Comair. “Our decision to make this investment was not taken lightly and is a critical component in managing our exposure to the volatile fuel price and thus minimizing the impact of the fuel price on airfares.”

Comair currently operates an all-Boeing fleet of 25 Classic and Next-Generation 737s powered by CFM56-3 and CFM56-7B engines, respectively, on its kulula.com and British Airways (operated by Comair) brands. The airline has four additional Next-Generation 737-800 aircraft on order and scheduled for delivery in 2015 and 2016.

Over the last seven years Comair has reduced its fuel burn per seat by 28% as it continues to upgrade its fleet. This investment will further improve the fuel burn per seat and reduce the impact on the environment. This order for the 737 MAX power by LEAP-1B engines will support future fleet renewal.

“CFM is committed to providing industry-leading performance and world class support to Comair and all of its airline partners,” said Cédric Goubet, executive vice president of CFM. “The LEAP-1B engine ensures double digit fuel efficiency improvement while providing the unmatched reliability of CFM engines. This reliability will help provide Comair with both higher utilization and lower operating costs. We are very excited to see our new engine entering service on the 737 MAX in Comair’s fleet, reinforcing our partnership with this very successful airline.”

The first LEAP-1B engine is scheduled to begin ground testing in the third quarter of this year. The engine is part of the most extensive ground and flight test certification program in the company's history and will encompass 60 engine builds over the next three years and will accumulate approximately 40,000 cycles.
before entry into service.

The foundation of the LEAP engine is heavily rooted in advanced aerodynamics, environmental, and materials technology development programs. It will provide 15 percent better fuel consumption and an equivalent reduction in CO2 emissions compared to today’s best CFM engine, along with dramatic reductions in engine noise and emissions. All this technology brings with it CFM’s legendary reliability and low maintenance costs.

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About Comair Limited

Comair Limited is a South African aviation and travel company, offering scheduled and non-scheduled airline services within South Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands, as its main business. The company operates under its low-fare airline brand, kulula.com, as well as under the British Airways livery, as part of its British Airways Plc. license agreement. Managed and owned by South Africans through its listing on the JSE, Comair has been operating successfully in this country since 1946. Comair is the only known airline to have achieved operating profits for 68 consecutive years and has a safety record which is internationally recognized.

About CFM International

CFM International, a 50/50 joint company between Snecma (Safran) and GE, is the world’s leading supplier of commercial aircraft engines, with more than 26,000 delivered to 530 operators around the globe. The company officially launched the LEAP engine, which is its first all-new centerline engine in nearly 40 years, in 2008.

The LEAP engine promises to bring double-digit improvements in fuel efficiency, emissions and noise, while the legendary reliability and low cost of ownership of its predecessor, the ubiquitous maintaining CFM56 engine family. The LEAP-1B is the sole powerplant for Boeing’s new 737 MAX, the LEAP-1A is an engine as an option on the A320neo family; and the LEAP-1C engine is the sole Western powerplant for the COMAC C919.

For more information, contact:

Jamie Jewell
513.552.2790
jamie.jewell@ge.com
Mobile: 513.885.2282