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Airbus offers Emirates A350/A380 mix in place of A340-600s

By Max Kingsley-Jones in Abu Dhabi



Airbus is hoping for closure on the long-running Emirates A340-600 saga by the end of the year, and is discussing a deal to swap the order, substituting A350 XWBs and additional A380s.

Emirates, the largest A380 customer with 43 aircraft on order, was also one of the launch customers for the A340-600 high-gross-weight variant, signing a deal in 2004 for 18 aircraft for delivery from the second quarter of 2007. However, last year the airline decided to expand its fleet of similarly sized Boeing 777-300ERs and suspend the A340 deal pending a decision by Airbus on proposed enhancements to the aircraft (Flight International, 21-27 March).

Habib Fekih, president Airbus Middle East, concedes that the A340-600 order is a casualty of Emirates' new fleet plan, and he told Flight International his preferred option is for it to be replaced by a mix of A380s and A350s.

However, Emirates president Tim Clark says "linking an A350 order and the prospect of more A380s to the A340-600 deal is somewhat premature. We have yet to engage with Airbus over a range of issues, but this will be resolved by the end of September." The A340-600 contract is one issue and the delay to the A380 programme is another, he adds.

Clark says he is "not convinced that there has been full visibility of all matters germane to the A380 slippage", and adds that Emirates is "yet to receive a commercial proposal" for the new A350 XWB.

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