

ATR and Comair open flight training centre

Turboprop manufacturer ATR recently announced the opening of its first training centre in Africa in partnership with Comair. The centre will be in Johannesburg and will be operational in April, 2011.



Ivan Lauthier (ATR vice president: training and flight operations), Guido Di Paolo (ATR sales director Africa) Erik Venter (Comair joint CEO) and Glen Warden (Comair: manager commercial operations and external training) celebrate the news of the new training centre.

The centre will be equipped with an FFS (Full Flight Simulator) and will provide training for ATR 42-300, ATR 42-500, ATR 72-200 and ATR 72-500 aircraft.

ATR's decision to open the training centre is due to its growing presence on the continent, both in terms of an increased number of operators and aircraft. Today, 80 ATR aircraft are being operated by 29 carriers in 20 African countries. Since 2005, ATR has received orders for some 50 new aircraft for African carriers.

World-class simulator facility

In order to ensure optimal operation of the training centre, ATR has partnered Comair in this venture, and the training centre will be housed at the new, world-class simulator facility under construction at Comair's operations centre in Johannesburg. With this association, ATR will benefit from Comair's support facilities and logistics and Comair will also provide ATR with technical support for the maintenance of the new training programmes.

ATR will provide flight and maintenance training programmes, pedagogical tools and instructors when requested by airlines. ATR African operators will also be able to dry lease the simulator and train their pilots and maintenance crew at the Johannesburg ATR Training Centre with their own instructors.

A step forward

Jean-Pierre Cousserans, ATR senior vice-president of customer services, said: "The opening of this new training centre is a step forward in our regional policy. We are increasing our customer services network worldwide in order to get closer to our operators. We are proud to partner Comair, a well-respected carrier, which also has extensive experience in training. The African market needs highly skilled pilots in order to support the phenomenal growth of regional routes across the continent. We will be glad to contribute to this growth by providing high-quality training services to the airlines. Johannesburg, as a major African hub, offers an optimal location for setting up our new training facilities, as it can be easily reached by air from major African cities."

Erik Venter, joint CEO of Comair, said: "Comair has provided classroom and simulator training for its own Boeing 737 pilots, as well as external customers for over 10 years. We are proud to partner ATR in the opening of its African Reference Training Centre (RTC). The investment by ATR will provide a much-needed boost for the development of the airline pilot skill pool in Africa and complements our own training programmes."

A definite need

There is a definite need for professional airline pilot development in Africa and, to this end, ATR and Comair share a common vision for the development of highly skilled professional pilots. On offer will be a full range of pilot type ratings, recurrent and proficiency training, to cabin crew and technical training. ATR will be in a position to offer clients full training on the ATR-42/72 turbo-prop aircraft, whilst Comair can offer turnkey medium jet aircraft training, ranging from pilot type ratings, recurrent and proficiency training, to cabin crew and technical training. This is particularly well suited to African airlines that do not have their own training facilities.

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