

Rugged aircraft join UN fleet

by Katherine Edmond

Pacific Aerospace Limited (PAL) is on a roll internationally, with two of its rugged utility aircraft about to join the fleet used by the United Nations World Food Programme in Africa.

Demand is burgeoning for the Hamilton company's flagship product, the 10-seat turbo prop P-750XL, which is fast becoming the world's most successful short takeoff and landing utility aircraft. All 16 planes under manufacture by PAL this year are pre-sold and the company is fast-tracking production capability to meet growing offshore orders, which account for around 90 percent of sales.

Todd Stephenson, PAL's commercial manager, says the UN's decision to lease two of the company's aircraft from its South

African agent Naturelink opens the door to a range of international opportunities.

"Plenty of other operators will see the plane in action on UN flights around the African continent and it also makes our aircraft a candidate for use in other UN programmes."

The P-750XL is ideally suited to tough environments and is frequently proving to be the only supply line to remote locations. Stephenson says it is particularly effective in hot climates, where it outperforms other aircraft with its ability to take off and land carrying a full load, regardless of the temperature.

The Middle East is also a strong emerging market for PAL says Stephenson. The company is in discussions with a range of operators following its first attendance at the Dubai Air

Show in late 2007. PAL set the record for the longest distance travelled by any aircraft on display at the show, having flown the P-750XL over 9,000 nautical miles in five days to get there.

PAL also captured attention at the event by screening video footage of the aircraft operating in tough environments in South Africa and Papua New Guinea. Its attendance at the airshow was supported by New Zealand Trade and Enterprise.

The PAC 750XL was originally sought after as an aircraft for sky diving but its high performance has fuelled demand for its use in transporting freight, passengers and undertaking agricultural work in hostile environments.

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Pacific Aerospace's rugged utility aircraft, the P-750XL, is being used in Africa by the UN World Food Programme.