GULF AIR UPS A320NEO ORDER BUT CANCELS NEW A330S

News / Airlines

Bahraini flag carrier Gulf Air has confirmed its future narrowbody fleet plan, adjusting a previous order with Airbus to sign up for an increased fleet of Neo-series A320s and A321s.

To be delivered from June 2018, the new assets will include 17 A321neo and 12 A320neo aircraft, with the deal worth an estimated $3.4 billion. No engine choice has been announced.

Detailed during the Bahrain International Air Show today, the development builds on a 2012 order for 10 A320neos and also replaces an earlier commitment to acquire six A330-300s. Speaking at the show, Airbus chief executive Fabrice Bregier confirmed the net gain of 13 aircraft with the customer.

The planned A330-300s were axed after Gulf Air opted to base its widebody strategy on the use of a future fleet of up to 16 Boeing 787s. The carrier announced a switch from the -8 to -9 version immediately before the Airbus deal was confirmed.

Gulf Air will use the Neo-series aircraft to replace its existing fleet of 22 A320/321s, with acting

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chief executive Maher Salman Al Musallam citing the new-generation model's low cost, fuel efficiency and increased range performance as supporting its decision.

Using the Neo will "provide future network expansion opportunities, both regionally and into Europe and the Indian subcontinent", the airline says.

Meanwhile, Al Musallam says Gulf Air expects to conclude talks with Bombardier "within the next couple of months" about a planned order for 10 CSeries narrowbodies. The carrier has a pending order for 10 CS100s, but he notes: "We don't have the luxury of time to discuss the details."

This story has been updated to correct the figure at the end of the third paragraph, from six to 13

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