

Investing in simulators

WORDS Dan Tye

SIMULATOR companies such as Alsim, Mechtronix and Frasca have all reported increased orders for units over the past 24 months with many of our main commercial flying training schools in the UK as customers. Stapleford Flight Centre, Bournemouth Commercial Flight Training and Flying Time have all taken delivery of Alsim AL200 units – and all say they've made a drastic improvement in training. As much as 35 hours on a 55 hour long instrument rating course can now be carried out one and Colin Dobney, Head of Training at Stapleford, says his students regularly pass their IR first time largely because two AL42 simulators are geared up to look and work exactly like the real-life fleet of DA42 aircraft they operate. "From the student point of view it's given them a far greater possibility of achieving the required standard in minimum course hours," he says. And minimum hours, means minimum training costs to the student, which is the largest challenge aspiring airline pilots will face. BCFT has had similar success, says Dena Dove. They have an Alsim 200 which is configured as a BE76 Duchess for IR training and as a generic Citation-type Jet for their MCC/JOC course. "We are approved to give up to 35 hours out of the 50 in simulators as part of the IR our machines are generally very busy," she adds. "In addition to the Alsim we also have a Frasca FNPT1 and a Duchess FNPT2."

Jet Orientation

More recently, CRM Aviation based at Cranfield, purchased the higher-spec Alsim ALX simulator to provide MCC and jet orientation training.

Mechtronix simulators are also becoming popular with units delivered to schools in Algeria, India and Brazil. PTC Ireland has an 'Ascent' model with incredible visuals and this has been central to the flying training syllabus. Multiflight, which runs the Atlantic Airlines Cadet Scheme, has used a Mechtronix sim since 2000 too. "We configure it as a Beech 76 or Duchess for IR training," says CEO, Mike McKenzie. "We're also looking at buying a jet simulator to offer Jet Orientation Courses."

OAA has also opted to buy a Mechtronix CRJ simulator as its existing B737 sims didn't reflect the type of aircraft that would be flown by its trainees that are destined to take up positions with NetJets and Flybe. Cabair is also looking at the possibility of a new simulator for Phase 3



An instructor in CTC's new 'EDGE' sim looks on as trainees are put through their paces

CTC's Rockwell Collins B737-800 simulator valued at \$11million

training of the MPL. Captain Mike Watt, Head of Training said they are currently awaiting clarification on a couple of items of the policy first though. Meanwhile, CTC Aviation has chosen to push on ahead and install an \$11million 'world first' simulator from Rockwell Collins called 'EDGE' and based on a Boeing 737-800. Captain Terry McHattie, a B737 Training Captain has been involved in the qualification process for CTC's latest addition and said, "I have to say I am incredibly impressed by the

device's advanced technology. The state of the art visuals plus the very latest six axis electric motion system have brought a whole new level of realism to simulator flying and the Instructor Operating Station (IOS), which uses the 'Windows' system, is very easy to use enabling the instructor to observe, record and train very effectively."

It's good when a sim behaves just like a real aircraft but what really matters is the work and learning that takes place within them and you cannot doubt that these new breed of simulators are giving our future airline pilots the best possible training philosophy; they then just need to take those skills with them into the real cockpit. ■

WANT AN AIRLINE JOB?

IF you're one of the many wanting to become an airline pilot then the 2010 Airline Trends & Ancillary Revenue Report is essential reading. The report shows how the recession affected the airline industry in 2009

and offers predictions on what 2010 will bring. The author, Raphael Bejar, CEO of Airsavings, a company that works with carriers around the globe to improve cost-efficiencies and performance has this advice, "While the

airline industry has been hard-hit by the recession, low cost and regional airlines have fared marginally better. These airlines traditionally avoid hiring senior pilots that carry higher salary requirements, and will implement their expansion

with younger personnel willing to work on more flexible packages. To that end, the low cost carriers in Europe and the UK may be the best opportunity for young pilots looking for work today." Read the report at www.airsavings.net