

## ONAIR CONTINUES TO CLIMB WITH NEW AIRLINE AND ENTRY INTO MARITIME

**OnAir's Afriqiyah Airways is the first to opt for connectivity across an entire fleet of short, medium & long-haul aircraft, reports Brendan Gallagher**

Connectivity provider OnAir got off to a flying start in the new year, announcing yet another addition to its customer list and making a first move into the maritime market.

The Geneva-based OnAir has signed Libyan carrier Afriqiyah Airways for its full suite of services—Mobile OnAir for mobile phones and other handheld devices, and Internet OnAir for laptops and in-seat systems.

This contract makes Afriqiyah the first airline in the world to provide connectivity across an entire fleet of short, medium and long-haul aircraft. The carrier plans a two-phase implementation. In the first, the full suite of services will be made available on the airline's fleet of three Airbus A330 widebodies. In Phase 2, Mobile OnAir will be implemented in the 14 A319 and A320 narrowbodies in service or on order.

The Middle East and North Africa currently lead the world in adopting OnAir. In early 2009, Wataniya Airways of Kuwait was the company's launch operator. Royal Jordanian and Qatar Airways followed. Egyptair, Jazeera Airways of Kuwait, Libyan Airlines, Oman Air and Saudi Arabian Airlines have also announced commitments as have Malaysia's AirAsia, Airblue of Pakistan, Hong Kong Airlines, Kingfisher of India, Shenzhen Airlines, TAM of Brazil and Qantas.

Oman Air is due to become the first carrier in the world to introduce Internet OnAir. The airline plans to roll out the service, along with Mobile OnAir, in all

classes aboard its new Airbus A330 fleet between the middle of this month and the summer. Oman Air's A330s are fitted with Airbus's ALNA V2 communications backbone, which supports Internet access via the in-seat IFE as well as laptops, and Inmarsat SwiftBroadband hardware from Honeywell.

The next carriers to offer Internet OnAir are likely to be Saudi Arabian Airlines or Egyptair, according to the connectivity provider.



**OnAir expands in Middle East and Northern Africa.**  
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OnAir chief executive Benoit Debains is confident that further announcements will come soon. "We currently have five major deals in negotiation and hope to close them by mid-year. One of them should blow your socks off," he says.

Beyond the aeronautical market space, OnAir has been contracted to provide mobile phone services aboard *Europa*, flagship of Germany's Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, via a Ku-band satellite system already installed on the vessel. OnAir uses Inmarsat L-band satellite as the air-ground link for its aeronautical services.

*Europa* will sail for the first time with OnAir aboard later this quarter. The Mobile OnAir service, supported by installation and maintenance partner Siemens IT Solutions and Services, will allow passengers to use mobile phones and BlackBerry-type devices to make and receive phone calls, send and receive emails and text messages, and access the Internet.

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"This is a market we want to learn more about," comments Debains. "Compared with aeronautical, it has proved fairly easy to enter in a technical and regulatory sense. And with more than 650 people aboard the ship for at least a week at a

### ARINC and Vizada Launch Inmarsat Classic Aeronautical Services over New I-4 Satellites

In December, ARINC and Vizada Americas announced the availability of Inmarsat Classic Aeronautical voice and data services using the next-generation Inmarsat I-4 satellite constellation, providing Aero H+ and Aero L packet data services, and Aero H+ voice services over Inmarsat's I-4 satellite network, as well as over the previous gen Inmarsat I-3 satellites.

time, it's a very different revenue model. We'll see what we can expect to earn and then make our minds up. But we certainly have no illusions about cornering this market—there are three or four other operators already well established."

Debains stresses that the move to another satellite technology presented few challenges. "The technology we have developed to manage mobile phone networks in the air and on the ground is not dependent on one satellite system or another," he says. "The ship had a Ku-band system already in place and it proved to be very cheap and easy to integrate our system with this link."

**Brendan Gallagher**, Contributing Editor, London

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