VOLARIS TO START SUBSIDIARY IN COSTA RICA

News / Airlines

Mexican low-cost carrier Volaris plans to launch a subsidiary airline in Costa Rica to allow it to expand its route network into South America.

“We are trying to obtain an AOC [air operator’s certificate] in Costa Rica,”Volaris chief executive Enrique Beltranena tells Flightglobal. “That process is moving well ahead.”

The airline embarked on the process in Costa Rica in May 2015, and Volarisplans to base its first aircraft in the Central American country by May, says Beltranena. “By May of this year we have to incorporate one aircraft there, and start the tabletop exercise to certify.”

The new airline could be operational sometime in the fall, he adds.

Beltranena says that it is too early to specify where the new airline will operate to, or give projections on expected passenger numbers. But a subsidiary carrier in Costa Rica will give Volaris access to fifth and sixth freedom route rights within Central America and to South America, he says.

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“With the new aircraft, the [Airbus A320]neos, Costa Rica is a very smart place to start an incursion into South America,” says Beltranena.

The airline expects to receive its first A320neos by the end of this year.

Volaris now operates to San Jose in Costa Rica and Guatemala City, but the majority of its route network is within Mexico and the USA. The airline has said it wants to expand into Canada and South America, but has not given a timeline for this.

The Mexican airline is not the only Latin American carrier which has recently expressed interest in setting up operations in Costa Rica. VivaLatinAmerica, a Panama-based company, had wanted to base a carrier in Costa Rica but shelved those plans due to complexities in obtaining operational authorities in Central American countries and high landing fees at some airports.

Beltranena, noting VivaLatinAmerica’s obstacles, says: “That’s what I’m telling you. This process is really unpredictable. There’s so much you need to fulfill, the politics, a lot of laws and things that you need to accomplish… We need to do this with all the patience in the world.”

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