



> **euroAtlantic the air bridge to Mecca with Islamic pilgrimages**

December 3rd 2006, Ponta Delgada

The **Board of euroAtlantic airways (EAA)** on the occasion of the meeting of the **XXXII National Congress of the Association of the Travel Agents** in Ponta Delgada announced the start of an important operation with «air bridge» characteristics to Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Islam which is one of the five pillars and should be made at least once in their lives. **euroAtlantic** is using two aircraft (**Boeing 757-200ER** and **Boeing 767-300ER**) between Lagos (Nigeria) and Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), the operational base of the Portuguese company during the transport movements of pilgrims with the final destination of Mecca. Until the final destination of Hajj both aircraft have flown around **900 hours**.

The **Chairman of the Board of Directors of EAA Tomáz Metello** and the **Director of APORTAR** – the association of entrepreneurs of air companies – would like to use this opportunity to greet and thank the journalists present in the Azores who regularly accompany **euroAtlantic** in person by the Chairman of **APAVT Mr. João Passos** all associates and congress members, wishing all the best to the Travel Agents and their business partners in their work and deeming the scheduled debate “Aviation in Portugal - Consolidation / Competition” opportune and extremely important, with the conclusions of this theme on the latest developments of Portuguese aviation and the impacts on competition of the privatisation of the national carrier or the theme of the end of the **Varig** operation in Portugal whose acronym is the upshot of the “Consortium Agreement” with **euroAtlantic** is still in the Portuguese skies. The conclusions and recommendations of the panel shall be subject to future, timely analysis by the EAA.

**euroAtlantic airways** has geared its «core business» towards this service segment, in particular the Hajj whose values turn in billions of US dollars, attracting the world air companies. In 2005, according to the agencies the number of faithful arriving at Mecca reached 2.5 million, with the authority responsible for visas in Saudi Arabia stating that a high number of these arrive by air. The entry of the Portuguese air companies in these operations began in **1976** when the current **Chairman of EAA, Tomáz Metello** – in Paris at the time as the **Commercial Manager of TAP Air Portugal** – brought the flag-bearing carrier access to a market with ensuing financial benefits. The pilgrimages constitute one of the special offer areas of the charter company of **Tomáz Metello and the Pestana Group** which has already operated for the catholic pilgrimages to Fátima from Ireland and intends to continue to invest in the promotion of this charter offer.

**For further information:**

**José Caetano Pestana**  
Public Relations Officer of euroAtlantic airways

[caetano.pestana@euroatlantic.pt](mailto:caetano.pestana@euroatlantic.pt)

Phone: (+351) 219 247 360  
Fax: (+351) 219 247 390

[www.euroatlantic.com](http://www.euroatlantic.com)