

> **Tomaz Metello confirms that his company is in conflict with TAP**

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LISBON: Although the chairman of TAP denied it, Fernando Pinto was very cautious and measured when commenting on a possible interest of the company he manages with regard to the Angolan air carrier, but the fact of the matter is that buying or administrating the reformulated TAAG is not only coveted by TAP.

Having talked to the Brasilturis Jornal, Tomaz Metello, the chairman of the Board of Directors and one of the owners of euroAtlantic Airways, a company in which the Pestana Group also holds a stake, confirmed that it is at an advanced stage of negotiations with the Angolan managers, "a hard negotiation and rife with administrative problems", but he hasn't given up yet and he believes that "there should be news in the near future ". "I would say that today we are just ahead of TAP", he stated.

The senior executive of euroAtlantic, a company specialising in leasing planes to other companies, as well as its own flights, and who since July last year has also managed a new air company for African territory, STP Airway for São Tomé e Príncipe, believes that its offer for TAAG was the best, despite the fact the administrative difficulties encountered vis-à-vis the ownership group cannot initially be overcome – "as also occurred with TAP and the other parties interested".

The Angolan Transport Minister also confirmed that TAP is one of the aviation companies interested in a strategic partnership with TAAG which recently began a recovery plan to get off the EU black list which prevents it from flying to Europe. Its forthcoming plans include a regular flight to São Paulo in the first half of this year.

TAAG is stepping its international expansion and in March it is to commence a third weekly flight to China, part of the bilateral relationship, as Angola is the main Chinese economic partner in Africa and the main supplier of oil.

The link with Beijing began in November with two weekly flights, using a B777-200ER with 254 seats and with a high occupation rate. This is the only direct flight from Africa to the Chinese capital with a flying time of 13h30. The Angolan company also wishes to launch a flight to Canton.