



WORLD NEWS

America buys the Harrier

The United States Navy concluded an agreement with the Ministry of Technology on December 19 for the purchase of 12 Hawker Siddeley Harriers for the US Marine Corps. It is the first export order for the Harrier, which entered service with the RAF as the free-world's first operational V/STOL combat aircraft earlier this year.

In a letter to Sir Arnold Hall, chairman and managing director of HSA, the Minister of Technology, Mr Wedgwood Benn, said: "I am delighted to be able to tell you that a formal contract has now been signed by the United States Government for the supply of 12 Harrier aircraft for use by the United States Marine Corps. This is a significant achievement and I should like to offer my congratulations to you, Rolls-Royce and the other companies concerned.

"It is particularly gratifying that the United States, with its considerable expertise and resources in aerospace research, development and production, has felt able to place with the British aircraft industry an order for a major aircraft weapons system for one of its own armed services. This reflects great credit on our industry and its ability to design and produce aircraft of a quite unique character.

"We all hope that you will now go on to secure further orders, not only in the United States, but also from other governments, many of which have already expressed interest in the aircraft."

At the same time Hawker Siddeley announced that they had entered into a co-operative production agreement with McDonnell Douglas at St Louis, Missouri, for the licence manufacture of subsequent aircraft in America. Both firms are already closely associated with one another as a result of the adoption of the Phantoms for the RAF and Royal Navy, for which aircraft HSA was nominated the sister design firm. The USMC Harriers will be designated AV-6B (the two letters standing for attack, V/STOL).

The order is estimated to be worth about £21 million with spares and support equipment. Its significance resides, however, in the breakthrough being made into the toughest market in the world. From Britain's point of view, the sale could hardly have been to a more appropriate customer. More than most military forces, the USMC is concerned with the establishments of bridgeheads during amphibious assaults—operations always fraught with more-than-usual risk and uncertainty—where a continuous air umbrella to provide cover to invading

forces is essential. Operating from amphibious ships or extreme forward sites, the Harrier will have the best chance to demonstrate its unique attributes.

Production of the batch of 12 (all single-seaters) will be phased in with the line of 90 (77 single-seaters and 13 two-seaters) under construction for the RAF. They will be virtually identical with the RAF aeroplanes, except for the powerplant which will be the uprated Pegasus 11 of 22,500lb, 101,250N, (development of which was authorised earlier this year by Mintech with an eye to the overseas market) in place of the 19,500lb, 87,750N, Pegasus 6. Delivery will be governed largely by the development of the new engine and will begin probably in mid-1971. The Pegasus 11 differs from its predecessor in having a modified compressor system, but component changes affect only 15-20 per cent of the engine, and retrospective modification of existing engines is feasible.

No Australian F-111s?

There is a strong possibility that the RAAF order for 24 General Dynamics F-111Cs will not be taken up following the latest accident to the type (see Defence, page 31) which has led to the grounding of the 223 F-111s in USAF service. The Air Force disclosed last weekend that the port wing fell off the F-111A which crashed on December 22.

MRCA Avionics Company

The system engineering organisation for the Multi-Role Combat Aircraft has been established with the formation of Avionics Systems Engineering GmbH. Shareholders are Elliott Space and Advanced Military Systems Ltd (EASAMS), Elektronik System Gesell-

schaft (ESG) and Società Italiana per l'Avionica (SIA). Scope of the organisation is to co-ordinate the design and integration of the whole avionics system of the MRCA, including writing of system, common sub-system and equipment specifications, preparation of overall avionics development plans, and monitoring of development for Panavia.

Libyan Defence Deal Cancelled

As this issue closed for press, BAC announced the cancellation of its air defence contract with Libya. It is believed to have been terminated because of non-payment of a progress instalment due in November.

Beagle Developments

Beagle's trading is continuing through a new company, Beagle 1969. This is the company for which parties interested in acquiring Beagle will negotiate with the receiver, Mr Cork. Some announcement is expected within two to three weeks. Meanwhile talks continue with various interested companies though not with any from Sweden, contrary to recent rumours.

Australia to Build Bell Parts

An order has been placed by Bell Helicopters for production of 900 Iroquois tail-rotor hubs by Hawker de Havilland Australia Pty Ltd. The contract followed successful completion by the company of five hubs, ahead of schedule, which were found by Bell to be of excellent quality.

Sharper Claws for the Skyhawk The A-4M, latest variant now in production at Douglas Aircraft Co Division of McDonnell Douglas Corporation for use by the US Marine Corps. This more powerful version, shown here in an artist's impression, is due to fly for the first time next April powered by an uprated Pratt & Whitney J52 engine, enlarged cockpit canopy, self-contained engine starter and a braking parachute

