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W rid news
India buying the Mirage 2000?
INDIA has ordered Dassault-Breguet
Mirage 2000 fighters, unconfirmed re-
ports from the country suggest.
Earlier this year Dassault chairman
B. C. Vallieres indicated that India
was likely to become the first export customer for the aircraft. Purchase of the Mirage 2000, and its possible

licence^manufacture by Hindustan Aeronautics, is expected to affect the country's Jaguar International pro-gramme.
India is going ahead with the pur-chase of 85 Jaguars, 40 to be built by British Aerospace and 45 to be sup-plied to Hindustan Aeronautics in kit

form. Plans to build a further 65 air-craft under licence will probably now be dropped. When Jaguar was selec-ted France mounted a strong cam-paign against the aircraft via the country's 'opposition party, which has since been elected into Govern-ment.

British naval spending cuts denied by Nott
BRITISH defence minister John Nott
denies "emphatically" that the Royal
Navy will be reduced to little more
than a coastal defence force without
carriers. He refutes London Daily
Telegraph allegations (these pages last week) that the anti-submarine cruisers, their aircraft and many RN surface ships would be mothballed in an effort to save up to £10,000 million in defence spending over the

next ten years. Early last week Prime Minister Thatcher sacked Navy Min-ister Keith Speed for his outspoken opposition to possible RN cuts.
Opening the Parliamentary debate on the 1981 Defence White Paper, Nott says that at no time has he "contemplated, sought, proposed or recommended (or been asked by the Prime Minister to contemplate, seek or recommend), any cut in the pub-

Sonaca keen to join commuter project
BELGIAN aircraft-manufacturer Son-
aca is keen to collaborate in a 30-50
seat commuter airliner project. Ac-
cording to managing director Marcel
Claisse, "Sonaca is open to any pro-
posal which could generate profitable work for the company.
"The choice of a partner is most important. Contact has been made with Aerospatiale (with a view to ATR42 collaboration), de Havilland Canada (Dash 8 programme), Saab-Fairchild and Shorts. The only agree-ment signed is a 'non-disclosure' agreement with Aerospatiale," he says.
Sonaca will not disclose its objec-tives for participation in any pro-gramme before manufacturers have

announced news of their projects at Paris. Claisse says that "discussions are scheduled to take place at Le Bourget, but no decision has been made as to a partner." He believes that "too many projects are now being studied by aircraft manufacturers in comparison with the size of the com-muter market."
Claisse says he believes that Belgian State financial aid would be essential for Sonaca participation in any such project, according to Inter avia News Letter. "Financing by the Bel-gian State will be dependent on our share of the programme. If important investments are required, Sonaca will naturally apply for Government aid," Claisse tells Flight.

lished defence budget." Margaret Thatcher emphasises that Britain in-tends to increase its spending by 3 per cent over the next few years and that the current review is to deter-mine how best to spend the increase. Defence Secretary Nott says his re-view is intended to build up a basic structure geared to manpower and equipment requirements over the next decade. The basic structure will rep-resent for each Service the most crucial and relevant element of the defence capability. Nott is seeking the correct balance between manpower and equipment, between weapons and the platforms to carry them and be-tween regular forces and reserves. Results of the review will be pre-sented in July. The likely cut in ex-penditure over the next ten years is £6,000 million, of which 75 per cent would come from the Royal Navy budget, according to some commenta-tors. The emphasis on Navy cuts re-flects a feeling that funding for the Trident nuclear deterrent should come from that Service's budget. The pro-jected cost of Trident is now nearly £6,000 million, according to The Times, suggesting that Britain has elected to buy the longer-range Trident II D5 missile now under de-velopment.

Small world . . .

CONCORDE should make its first visit to New Zealand with a London-Auck-

land charter flight planned to leave on October 16. The trip could see a new record, breaking the 23hr 50min time set up in 1953 by an RAF Can-berra.

The £3,450 fare includes seven days' "first-class" accommodation in Auck-land. Current first-class fare is

£2,880 return. Enquiries about the 100 seats available should go to organiser Bob Pooley at First Concorde to New Zealand, Elstree Aerodrome, Herts; telephone 01-953 4870/0442 52576.

British Aerospace rolls out the 146 at Hatfield on May 20. Flight photographer Steve Piercey photographed it from the top of the flight-test hangar, in which the aircraft Will spend most of the time before its first flight. Current plans call for a first flight in August. BAe announced an Air Wisconsin 146 order at the ceremony (see page IS90)