Engine reliability problems hit Belgian Mirage force

THE Belgian Air Force is having
difficulty maintaining the eight fighter
squadrons pledged to Nato, because of
problems with its Mirage 5Bs. Time
between overhaul (TBO) for the
Mirage's Snecma Atar turbojet has dropped from 800hr to 350hr because of compressor problems. As many as 20 Mirage 5Bs may be grounded awaiting overhaul, providing a source of spares to keep the others flying. Mirage 5Bs equip four squadrons with 2 Wing at Florennes and 3 Wing at Bierset. Of the 106 single-seat, two-seat, and reconnaissance aircraft delivered since 1972, only 78 remain, of which 50 were combat-ready last week. Of the 78, 13 are Mirage 5BD conversion trainers lacking electronic countermeasures equipment. This re-duces the number of combat aircraft to 65, seven short of the 72 required to form four squadrons.
If attrition continues at its present rate of two aircraft a year, only 55 Mirages will remain in service by 1987, the date when, according to the Defence Ministry's ten-year plan, the

aircraft will begin to be replaced. Since only 50 are combat-ready now, the number available could dwindle to 40 by 1987. The Belgian Air Force fears that a substantial reduction in the number of Mirage squadrons may be inevitable.

While no decision has yet been taken, either by the Service or by the Government, the recent agreement to fund long-lead items for 18 additional F-16s may indicate that early replace-ment of the Mirage 5s is possible. Belgian production of the 116 F-16s ordered in 1975 ends in 1984. A choice of replacement aircraft is now expec-ted this summer, allowing the Air Force to re-equip at least one Mirage squadron before 1987.
In addition to the four Mirage units, the Belgian Air Firce has four F-104G squadrons, 1 Wing at Beauvechain having re-equipped with F-16s in 1981. As with the Mirage 5, the official F-104G engine TBO is 800hr; the actual figure for the aircraft's General Electric J79 is 770hr. Belgian combat aircraft average 150hr use every year.

RAF armour to protect Harrier sites
Left A Sultan ar-
moured command
post of I Sqn RAF
Regiment. Field squad-
rons are equipping
with Scorpion light
tanks, Samson break-
down vehicles. Sul-
tans and (below)
Spartan armoured
personnel carriers.
The armour will pro-
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F-100 drone flies
SPEBRY'S QF-100 Super Sabre target drone has made its first unmanned flight. The QF-100, developed to re-place PQM-102 Delta Dagger drones, flew from Tyndall AFB, Florida. The QF-100, flying at 35,000ft and 275kt, was intercepted several times by an F-106 Delta Dart.

The QF-100 is able to operate be-tween 200ft and 50,000ft at up to Mach 1-3. The drone can pull higher g than the manned F-100 because of its lighter weight and lack of pilot. The capability to fly up to six QF-lOOs in formation is being developed for the US Army.
Each QF-100 can make three pres-entations (opportunities for attacking weapons) per sortie. Life expectancy of each drone is expected to be ten flights. The US Air Force has options for 72 QF-lOOs under the present contract; the programme could even-tually call for 300 conversions. The aircraft is expected to be fully opera-tional with Tactical Air Command by October 1983.
The F-lOOs are undergoing drone conversion at Sperry's Litchfield Park, Arizona, plant. Previous Sperry drone conversions have used Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses, Lockheed P-80 Shooting Stars, Boeing B-47 Stratojets, Convair F-102 Delta Daggers, and Lockheed F-104 Starfighters.

Tracer...
Wild Weasel F-4G Phantoms need a faster radar warning system than the present APR-38, which needs up to 20sec to lock on to a radiation source. A request for bids to supply a faster-reacting system is expected soon. The new system will complement the Texas Instruments AGM-88A Harm

(high-speed anti-radiation missile), due into US Navy and US Air Force service next year.

The Philippines is to receive 15 Bell UH-1H helicopters, plus spares, for $36 million.

Turkey is buying ten search-and-rescue and four electronic-warfare UH-lHs.

The Royal Navy's only hydrofoil, the Boeing Jetfoil HMS Speedy, is to be sold. Conditions in the North Sea, where Speedy was on trial as a fish-eries protection vessel, have proved too rough.

FLIGHT International. 13 February 1982

Casualties...
• A French Navy C-54E crashed into a mountain on New Caledonia on January 21, killing the crew of seven. The aircraft was on a training flight from Noumea, capital of the French-owned Pacific island.

• A United States Navy Grumman EA-6B Prowler crashed in the Philip-pines on January 22. The four-man crew ejected safely.

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