DEFENCE

Austrian Airlines joins Austrian fighter search
VIENNA

Austrian Airlines might buy
new fighters for the Austrian
Air Force and lease them to
the Service.

The reasoning behind this
novel idea is that Austrian
Airlines has long wanted
to set up its own maintenance
base. At present, all mainte-
nance is carried out under
contract by Swissair. The
original idea was that 99
per cent Government-owned
Austrian Airlines would
set up a new company, the
Austrian Aircraft Company,
to service Austrian Airlines
aircraft and, to make the
AAC economically viable,
Austrian military aircraft plus
some co-ordination of offset
work.

But Austria's long search
for a new fighter has come
across a series of economic
stumbling blocks, and it ap-
pears that Austrian Airlines,
increasingly frustrated that its
maintenance-base hopes are
receding, has offered to buy
the fighters and then lease or
sell them to the Air Force, as
one possible way around the
economic problems.

Austrian Airlines says that
its plan to found AAC "has
developed from the original
concept, but nothing is yet
concrete. There are several
options, and we are talking

with the Ministry of Finance
and the Ministry of Defence.
The simplest arrangement is
that the Government buys the
fighters and AAC would
maintain them, but there are
several other options, includ-
ing the buy/lease idea."
Flight asked how the new
Icao legislation against shoot-
ing at aircraft owned by air-
lines would be affected should
Austrian Airlines buy the
fighters. A company spokes-
man said "These are obviously
details that we must look into,
we have not thought of that
yet, it's not really that con-
crete you know, only one of
several options that we and
the Defence and Finance
Ministries are currently
exploring".
The situation is further
complicated by a threat from
Defence Minister Friedhelm
Frischenschlager to disband
the Air Force should a decis-
ion to buy new fighters not be
made this year. At present the
air arm, which is a corps in the
Army, operates 32 Saab
105OEs as front-line equip-
ment. In 1981 the Austrians
came close to ordering the
Mirage 50, but the deal fell
through because of lack of
money.
Contenders in this second
attempt at a Saab 105 replace-
ment include the Dassault
Mirage III, Northrop F-5A/

E/F, Saab J35 Draken, and
Sepecat Jaguar. Earlier plans
to follow on the winning con-
tender with more advanced
aircraft in 1995 (respectively
the Mirage 2000, F-20 Tiger-
shark, J37 Viggen or J39
Gripen, and Tornado or Efa)
might now have foundered.
The Austrian Air Force will
issue a Request for Proposals
later this year for podded
reconnaissance systems which
will be fitted to the Saab
105OEs and, later, to the new
fighter. Two systems will be
needed, infrared linescan and
long-range oblique photo-
graphy.

Korea seeks

new 0V- 10s
COLUMBUS

South Korea is negotiating
the purchase of 24 new Rock-
well North American OV-10D
Bronco light reconnaissance
aircraft, and Rockwell says
that several other nations
have expressed interest in
buying the aircraft.
If the Korean deal goes
through it will mean the re-
opening of the OV-10 pro-
duction line, closed since
1977. The aircraft will proba-
bly be built at Rockwell's
Columbus, Ohio, facility,
where all Bronco tooling has
been stored since the close of
production, but Rockwell has
not ruled out the possiblity of
the aircraft being built in
Korea.

Security precludes Rock
well revealing other interested
nations, but the company say
that it will step up its market
ing efforts if there is a re-star
of OV-10 production. Accord-
ing to Rockwell, Korea will
incur the cost of a re-start if
the OV-lOs are bought. Total
cost of a Korean contract has
not, as yet, been decided.

It is thought that Korean
Broncoes will have forward-
looking infrared (Flir) sys-
tems, as in the US Marine
Corps OV-lODs. Armament
could include Hughes Mav-
erick AGM-65 air-to-surface
missiles and General

Dynamics Stinger air-to-air
missiles.

Boeing tests
combat

composites
SEATTLE ~

Boeing has started on a
$775,000, 39-month study for
the US Air Force's Aero-
nautical Systems Division on
survivability of combat
aircraft composite compres-
sion structures.

Boeing is tasked with pro-
viding survivability/vulnera-
bility data for the design of
composite structures under
compression loading. Tests will
involve the design of flat plates
and box-beams made of vari-
ous composite materials. The
items will be compressed, shot
at, and then loaded to failure.

Sikorsky's S-75 advanced composite aircraft programme (Acap) demonstrator flight test vehicle has been rolled out at Stratford, Connectic Sikorsky and Bell were contracted by the US Army as part of the LHX light helicopter programme. The Army called for a weight reduction o cent, cost savings of at least 17 per cent, and 20 per cent improvement in reliability and maintainability

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