DEFENCE

Rafale

partners
sought
formally
PARIS

France last week held the first
official talks with Belgium,
Denmark, the Netherlands,
and Norway on building the
Dassault Rafale combat
aircraft as a five-nation Euro-
pean venture, reports Gilbert
Sedbon from Paris.

Senior Defence Ministry
representatives of the four
nations met in Paris on
January 21 with Emile Blanc,
head of the French Defence
Ministry's armament divi-
sion, as well as with Dassault,
Snecma, and Thomson-CSF.
All four countries currently
operate the General Dynam-
, ics F-16 and are searching for
a mid-1990s replacement for
the US aircraft.

The representatives "dis-
cussed their future defence
needs and examined a time-
* table for the realisation of
such a programme, with the
prospect of stepping up co-
' ordination of their countries'
armaments industries," one
, official said.

The Netherlands was repre-
sented by Deputy Defence
Minister Jan van Houwel-
ingen, a known activist for
greater arms collaboration in
Europe. Representing French
industry were Benno Claude
Vallieres, president of
Dassault, and Jacques
Benichou, head of Snecma,
which is developing the new
M.88 engine for the Rafale.
France has previously held
bilateral talks with each of the
other four nations, but last
week's negotiations were the
first held at such a high level.
Belgium, Denmark, the
Netherlands, and Norway
have not yet committed them-
selves to Rafale, however. The
four-nation steering group,
set up to study replacements
for the F-16, is still under-
stood to be looking at alterna-
tives, including the European
Fighter Aircraft under devel-
opment by Britain, Italy,
Spain, and West Germany.
The group will report back in
March.

The 9'5-tonne Rafale
demonstrator, powered by two
General Electric F404
engines, begins flight tests in
southern France in late May
or early June. Dassault is now
working on a lighter, 8-5-
tonne, Rafale B design to
meet French Air Force and
Navy requirements.
The French Defence Minis-
try will finalise its Rafale
specification in February or
March 1987, after the first
demonstrator has completed
six months of flight tests. The
French Navy requires some 50
ACMs, while the Air Force
needs up to 280 ACTs. Both
are still aiming for a 1995 in-
service date.

The Navy is slightly ahead
of the Air Force in the budget
cycle, having an urgent
need to replace its ageing
Crusaders, according to
Dassault's Yves Robin.
Dassault's fly-by-light Mirage
2000 has completed flight
trials, and Dassault confirms
that the Rafale will carry
weapons during its flight test
programme. Snecma's M.88
has already reached design
temperatures during bench
testihg.

EC-18Bgoes
operational
WRIGHT-PATTERSON ~"~

The first of four EC-18B
aircraft modified by the US
Air Force for the advanced-
range instrumentation air-
craft (Aria) role has
performed its maiden opera-
tional mission.

The aircraft supported a

satellite launch from the
Space Shuttle Columbia.
Staging from Nairobi, in
Kenya, the aircraft received
and recorded telemetry data
in support of a communica-
tions satellite deployment.
The C-18 is a military
version of the Boeing 707
commercial airliner. The
USAF's Aeronautical Sys-
tems Division at Wright-
Patterson AFB, Ohio,
purchased eight used 707s in
1982. Four are being modified
for the Aria mission, to join
the current fleet of EC-135s.
The others will be assigned to
future projects.

Gandhi

inducts

MJG-27IVI
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi
inducted the first Indian-
made MiG-27M strike air-
craft into Indian Air Force
service on January 11 at cere-
monies at a base of Western
Air Command.

India plans to buy 165 MiG-
27Ms, designed in the Soviet
Union but produced under
licence by Hindustan Aero-
nautics at its Nasik Division.
The aircraft is derived from
the MiG-23, already in Indian
Air Force service, but has
enhanced avionics and attack
equipment, and can carry a
bigger payload.
Meanwhile, India is re-
ported to be on the verge of
receiving the first MiG-29s
from the Soviet Union.

TRACER

McDonnell Douglas has
received a $3,387 million
fixed-price, incentive, full-
scale development contract
for further development of the
US Air Force's latest airlifter,
the C-17A. Full-scale devel-
opment is expected to con-
tinue until mid-1992 under
the latest contract and will
involve the design, develop-
ment, building, and testing of
the C-17.

Gulfstream's G-III has
entered service with the Ital-
ian Air Force as the primary
VIP transport. The Italian
Government is the 30th to
operate the G-III. The aircraft
will be operated by the 31st
Stormo.

West Germany's Naval Air
Arm has leased a single
Dornier 228-201 light trans-
port aircraft for six months of
flight trials as a passenger and
cargo transporter. The air-
craft will operate in support of
two Do.28-D2 Skyservants
used for oil-spillage surveil-
lance in the North and Baltic
Seas. The 228 will be passed
on to the West German Air
Force at the end of the trials
for a further six-month evalu-
ation in the VIP transport
role.

Shorts has won its third UK
Ministry of Defence contract
for the Javelin close air
defence weapon system
(CADWS). The CADWS
contract is worth over £160
million, and comes close on
the heels of orders from three
undisclosed foreign govern-
ments for the Blowpipe
missile system, from which
Javelin is derived.

Each EC-18B is fitted with a navigation station, a modified electrical system, and an improved environmen
control system

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