Left: theNH90pre-
feasibility study
identified the concept
of a shipborne
helicopter reactive in
anti-submarine
warfare over a 93km
(50nm) radius with
simultaneous anti-
surface warfare
capability

Agusta has at present a 35% share in the Frll. 2 billion ($1.94 billion) NH 90 pro-gramme and would take a 38% stake in Tonal if it goes ahead.

BRITISH RESERVE
Although Tonal would be essentially a development of the existing A. 129 Mangusta, the UK House of Commons Defence Committee says that the prospects of the programme
"... being com-
pleted without fur-
ther difficulties
and delay do not
look good". The
committee says
further: "If there
should be doubts
that the A. 129 will
cost-effectively
meet the Army's
requirements and
if differences be-
tween partner na-
tions over how to
pursue the pro-
gramme re-appear,
we would expect
the UK seriously to
reconsider its

continuing
participation in the programme".
The committee is also questioning whether a requirement for a light-attack helicopter should be met by a new programme. Indeed officials now refer to the "Attack Helicopter" requirement, indicating a preference for a heavier machine such as the McDonnell Douglas AH-64 Apache. In its recent report on the subject, the committee states that, until the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) comes to a " . . . firm conclusion as to the

size and capability of the helicopter that it requires ... it is likely to find that no specification, not even its own, is ultimately satisfactory".
Westland is keeping its options open for work on -an attack helicopter for the British Army: -At last year's Paris Air Show the company signed a memorandum of under-standing (MoU) with McDonnell Douglas securing manufacturing participation should

The TTH can carry a light tactical transport vehicle

Apache be chosen by the UK Ministry of Defence. In February this year Westland also signed an MoU with Aerospatiale and MBB giving the company a major share of the Eurocopter Tiger if selected for the British Army. Aerospatiale is offering three. Tiger variations with degrees of customisation to suit UK needs. Another option for the UK would be the LH light-attack/reconnaissance helicopter being developed for the US Army.

TONAL FIGHTS FOR LIFE

Tonal seems to be ending up as a compromise. The Italians want the helicopter to be as
similar to Agusta's A. 129 as possible, for standardisation, while the other partners

want a larger and more sophisticated machine. Until June the four partners will study

the latest cost-definition and technical report. They have the option of taking a further six months to evaluate the latest proposals and, given current Dutch reticence a decision to enter a pre-development phas is unlikely before the end of 1990. If the

project receives the go-ahead, a year's predevelopment would focus on cost reductions

and technical studies.

The Tonal project is jeopardised by the existence of several viable alternatives which could easily be adapted to meet the likely requirements of the Tonal partner nations. As the UK's Defence Committee points out, the McDonnell Douglas AH-64 Apache "... looks to be the logical alternative to the A. 129 LAH". Another partner country, the Netherlands, is also being wooed by Apache salesmen in a bid to retain combat helicopters as a Dutch defence requirement. The Dutch Ministry of Defence has decided to postpone any combat helicopter procurement deci-sions until the CFE reduction talks have been concluded successfully. In tandem with this the Dutch want to cut Gi l billion ($2 billion) from their defence budget over the next four years. The Dutch are also hopeful that CFE ceilings on the number of combat helicopters in Europe might yet obviate the need to purchase such machines.
The NH 90 programme involves the design
of two versions, the NATO Frigate Helicopter
(NFH90) and the Tactical Transport Helicop-
ter (TTH90). The latter would be an 8.5t
twin-turbine machine able to carry a 2t
payload or 20 troops. The tactical version of

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