DEFENCE

Germany nears Alpha Jet deal
BY DOUGLAS BARRIE
IN MUNICH

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he German air force is in the
final stages of negotiating
the sale of up to 60 Dassault/
Dornier Alpha Jets to the French
air force.

The air force says that, fol-
lowing a request from the
French Government, "...we are
now involved in negotiations
and it looks likely that we can
fulfil the request. There are no
obstacles, so there shouldn't be
any problem with the sale. We
will sell about 60 aircraft." The
Alpha Jets, in service in the
close-support role, are being
phased out because of German
defence cuts.
The French air force will use
the German aircraft to replace
some of its own Alpha Jets, used
for weapons and tactics training
at Cazaux AB and which are

coming to the end of their fa-
tigue life (Flight International,
4-10 March).
Even after the sale goes ahead,
Germany will have around 100
Alpha Jets to dispose of; Portu-
gal is one potential customer.
The future of the Alpha Jets,
based at Furstenfeldbruck and
used in the advanced training
role for pilots about to go to the
Panavia Tornado Tri-national
Training Unit at Cottesmore in
the UK, is still undecided.
Pilots now spend around 30h
on Alpha Jets to accustom them-
selves to European weather con-
ditions afid receive additional
experience before going to Cot-
tesmore.

The base's future is being re-
viewed by Gerhard Stoltenberg,
the German minister of defence,
who will have to decide on
whether to continue with the
Tornado lead-in training at

ATARS faces 1 April axe deadline
BY GRAHAM WARWICK
IN ATLANTA

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programme to develop a
filmless reconnaissance sys-
tem for the US Air Force, Navy
and Marine Corps is over
budget, behind schedule and in
danger of cancellation.
The advanced tactical air re-
connaissance system (ATARS),
to equip Air Force RF-16s, Ma-
rine Corps F-18Ds and medium-
range unmanned air vehicles
operated by the Air Force and
Navy, has been under develop-
ment since 1988.
While the US Air Force
ATARS programme office says
only that it is conducting a "cost
and budget review" and that a
"rebaselined plan" will be ready
"in a few weeks", sources close
to the programme say the Air
Force is prepared to cancel Mar-
tin Marietta's development con-
tract if a solution is not found
by 1 April.
The system, to be carried in-
ternally by F-18Ds and in a pod
by RF-16s, comprises visible
light medium- and long-wave
electro-optical sensors, infra-red
linescanner, digital tape record-

ers, reconnaissance management system and secure datalink.
ATARS is similar in concept to
the infra-red reconnaissance sys-
tem in service on Royal Air
Force Tornado GR. lAs.
The $119 million, 53-month
ATARS development contract
was awarded to Control Data in
May 1988. In January 1991 the
contract was transferred to Mar-
tin Marietta after it acquired the
rights to develop, test and pro-
duce ATARS from Control Data
in October 1990. Flight testing
began in February 1991 using
two RF-4C Phantoms.

Flight tests of ATARS in the
Marine Corps' successor to the
RF-4C, the F-18D, programmed
to begin in September, were later
delayed to December 1991. They
are now scheduled to begin in
the latter part of 1992.
Martin Marietta blames the
delay on the switch from the
RF-4C to the F-18D, which
changed the performance re-
quirement, weight and size of
ATARS. The company has asked
the Air Force for more time and
money to complete develop-
ment, but no compromise has
yet been reached. •

German Alpha Jets: to help France

Furstenfeldbruck on the Alpha
Jets or to close down the base.
Stoltenberg's decision is likely
to be based on political and
budgetary issues as much as on
military requirements.
The air force wishes to con-
tinue training with a small num-
ber of Alpha Jets. It considered
contracting maintenance out to
Dornier or Dassault until it dis-
covered that this solution would
be too costly.
If Furstenfeldbruck closes as a
flying base, the likelihood is that
pilots will go directly from T-38
Talon training in the USA to
flying Tornados. •

Bedek Aviation

will maintain

USAF(E) Eagles

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he Bedek Aviation division
of Israel Aircraft Industries
(IAI) is to undertake mainte-
nance of about 60 McDonnell
Douglas F-15C Eagles for US Air
Force (Europe) during the next
five years.
The fighters will be flown
from their bases in Europe to
undergo programmed depot
maintenance and a multi-stage
improvement programme
(MSIP). Work on the first air-
craft starts soon and, according
to Avner Raz, Bedek general
manager, four F-15s will be
overhauled and upgraded in
1992. The five-year contract in-
volves 60 to 75 aircraft.

All the jigs and other dedi-
cated equipment for the aircraft
have been flown to Israel by the
USAF, and wing structure work
will be performed on a special
line. Systems that are part of the
MSIP will also be provided by
the Americans.

Raz says that work on the first
of the F-15s will take about
eight months, falling to an esti-
mated five months per aircraft
later on. USAF pilots will test-fly
the aircraft in Israel before re-
delivery. D

NEWS IN BRIEF

SFW GO-AHEAD
Textron Defense Systems has
been cleared to begin low-rate
production of the anti-tank
sensor-fuzed weapon (SFW) for
the US Air Force. SFW dis-
penses Skeet smart submuni-
tions, which the USAF also
plans to use in its version of
the Navy's Texas Instruments
stand-off Advanced Interdiction
Weapon System.

F-117 UPGRADE
US Air Force Lockheed F-
117As are to be upgraded with
an enhanced-accuracy version
of Honeywell's H-423 laser in-
ertial navigation system- The
standard H-423 equips- USAF
F-4s, F-16s, F-llls, C-130s and
MH-53s, while all-digital ver-
sions are used in the C-17 and

X-31 as well as in Sweden's
Saab JAS39 Gripen.

DSP FOLLOW-ON
The US Air Force has begun its
search for a follow-on early-
warning system to replace the
Defense Support Program satel-
lites now used to detect ballis-
tic-missile launches.

AMRAAM SPLIT
The US Air Force has split
production of the latest batch
of AIM-120 advanced medium-
range air-to-air missiles
(AMRAAMs) between the
weapon's developer, Hughes
Aircraft, and second-source
producer Raytheon. Hughes
gets $253 million for 401
AMRAAMs and Raytheon $255
million for 490 missiles.

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