GENERAL AVIATION

QUICKER COMANCHE
LoPresti Speed Merchants has in-
troduced an engine-cowling and
propeller-spinner modification for
the Piper twin Comanche, which
increases the turhocharged pis-
ton-twin's cruise speed by more
than 7kt (13km/h).

Gulfstream plans

plant expansion
G

ulfstream Aerospace has an-
nounced a two-stage expan-
sion of its Savannah, Georgia,
plant. With deliveries of the
improved Gulfstream IV-SP to
begin in June 1993 and produc-
tion of the long-range
Gulfstream V in 1995, the com-
pany will be building two busi-
ness-jet types for the first time.
The first phase of construc-
tion, to begin in the latter half
of 1993, will increase floorspace
by 50%. About 4,650m2

will be
used to build GV wings (G1V
wings are built by Textron Aer-
ostructures). The Gulfstream
service centre will be doubled in
size, with the addition of
25,100m2

, to site the larger GV
alongside existing Gulfstreams.
The construction of a

20,500m2

marketing, training
and administration site com-
pletes the first expansion phase.
A second phase is planned for
1995 and would add 27,4002

to

the completion centre to
accommodate the GV.

Gulfstream plans to freeze the
GV design early in 1993. The
11,650km (6,300nm)-range air-
craft is some 2.5m longer than
the GIV-SP, with a 4m-longer
wingspan. Certification and first
deliveries are due in 1996.

The GV cabin mockup will be
shipped to Europe early in 1993
for a five-city tour. D

MD 900 Explorer tests begin

BY GUY NORMS
JN LOS ANGELES

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wenty-three months of flight
testing of the McDonnell
Douglas Helicopter (MDH) MD
900 Explorer has begun, fol-
lowing its maiden flight at the
company's headquarters in Mesa,
Arizona, on 18 December.
The eight-seat helicopter, dis-
tinguished by its no-tail rotor
(NOTAR) anti-torque system,
was flown for 20min. Simple
hover manoeuvres and slow-
speed forward, sideward and
rearward flights were conducted.
MDH is due to begin deliver-
ing production helicopters after
October 1994, when it expects
to receive US Federal
Aviation Administra-
tion certification, al-
most a year later than
planned originally. De-
spite this, the company
says that it still holds
letters of interest with
non-refundable depos-
its for more than 250
Explorers, represent-
ing a full production
rate until 1997/8.

Key aspects of the
flight-test programme

will include verification of the
anti-torque system in the first
purpose-built NOTAR-equipped
helicopter. MDH has already
gained considerable experience
with the tail-rotorless directional
control and anti-torque system
through its development of the
MD 520N helicopter — a devel-
opment of the MD 500 series.
The company has delivered 34
MD 520Ns since its introduction
in October 1991.

A variable-pitch, engine-
driven fan provides pressurisa-
tion for the tail-boom, enabling
the NOTAR system to operate.
The company says that the fan,
like the hub and main rotor
blades, will be maintained "on

condition", rather than replaced
arbitrarily after a set number of
flying hours.
Another main area of scrutiny
during the programme will be
the all-composite five-blade
main rotor and its bearingless
flex-beam blade retention and
pitch case. The system is lubri-
cation-free and is integrated
with a tuned, fixed rotor mast
and mounting truss, which
MDH will evaluate to assess
vibration reduction.

The first Explorer and 99 sub-
sequent production craft will be
powered by two 450kW
(600shp) Pratt & Whitney Can-
ada PW206As, with later models
offered with 470kW Turbomeca

TM319 Arrius 2Cs as The Explorer gets ojj the ground and heads J or flight tests
Major participants
include Australia's
Hawker de Havilland,
which became a fully-
fledged partner in 1989
to design and manufac-
ture the airframe;
Japan's Kawasaki
Heavy Industries pro-
duces the transmission;
and Canadian Marconi
provides integrated in-
strument displays. •

BAe studies Prestwick training options
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ritish Aerospace's flying-
training subsidiary, now
called Flying College, based at
Prestwick, Scotland, is studying
options which could provide
more work and reduce individ-
ual training costs. The options
include splitting contracts be-
tween the UK and Australia and
providing* 'conversion to Euro-
pean standards following train-
ing overseas.
The operation was set up pri-
marily to provide sponsored
pilot training for airlines, but, in
the face of a severe downturn in
business, it has switched up to
25% of its resources to training
self-funding students at a cost of
around £60,000 each. Even
though airline business is show-
ing signs of recovery, BAe has
undertaken a broad re-assess-
ment of its activities.

A new managing director has
been named. Most senior execu-
tives are moving to Prestwick
from the present site at Farn-
borough, or are retiring. The
new managing director is David
Moss, who previously rep-
resented BAe in Saudi Arabia.
Former managing director John
Denney, Capt Graham Jenkins,
operations vice-president, and
Peter Fontes, former vice-
president of business devel-
opment, retired at the end of
1992. Marketing vice-president
Capt David Martin continues to
work from the south of England.

BAe is competing with rival
organisations for a Malaysia Air-
lines training contract. The com-
pany is proposing the use of
Prestwick and the BAe-Ansett
Flying College at Tamworth,
Australia (in which BAe has a

50% stake). The Malaysian car-
rier requires 240 pilots a year for
the next five years, and has
already placed some students at
Tamworth, as well as in the UK,
Indonesia and the USA.

The company is also consider-
ing the provision of tuition
under Canadian or other non-
Joint Aviation Authorities (JAA)
standards, with subsequent con-
version to meet those require-
ments once they become law. It
believes that, under new laws
now in draft form, the JAA may
not approve flying training pro-
vided exclusively outside the
JAA area and then rubber-
stamped in Europe. Gulf Air
students have begun training at
Prestwick and BAe hopes to start
pilot and management training
for another Middle East operator
in early 1993. D

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