

Aurora not up to scratch yet?

Sir — In view of the detail on operating and support costs published since the withdrawal from service of the Lockheed SR-71, it is surprising to read that this aircraft is to be revived in the US Air Force inventory (*Flight International*, 18-24 January, P16).

It has been widely assumed by most observers that the SR-71's role would be taken over by its replacement, the Aurora, and that the retirement of the SR-71 was an indication that the replacement programme had progressed to the point where this decision could be taken.

It would seem that the



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retirement decision was premature and that the Aurora is proving more difficult to develop than expected.

This would not be surprising if the speculation on the powerplant is correct. An update on the SR-71's airframe and

avionics is relatively straightforward; development of a mixed-cycle powerplant is not, particularly as such an engine would have limited application in the immediate future.

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Flight duty times: 'harmonisation' not the main aim

Sir — My first impression from R P Holubowicz's letter (*Flight International*, 11-17 and 25-31 January) was that the general secretary of the International Air Carriers Association expects pilots to act like robots.

More interesting is the statement by K Koplin (*Flight International*, Letters, 1-7 February), the new secretary general of the European Joint Aviation Authorities (JAA), who was unhappy about the article "Duty bound" (*Flight International*, 14-20 December, P32).

I believe the article to be correct and I claim that it was the JAA Operations (OPS) Committee which "thought up" the latest proposal and has, over the years, changed proposals quite arbitrarily.

The validity of this process must further be questioned in view of the also-arbitrary imposition of a requirement for a two-thirds majority of votes from member authorities, a procedure which has been used throughout the last two or three OPS Committee meetings before changes could be made to the proposals. Thus, after proper discussion and consultation, amendments sought by a significant

majority of OPS Committee Members were still rejected.

Worst of all, however, is that the JAA did not listen to medical advice. I have proposed that the medical experts alone be tasked with finding a new scientific proposal, but that was not acceptable to the Committee.

We are awaiting a medical report compiled by NASA, "Principles and guidelines for duty and rest scheduling in commercial aviation", wherein five of the world's leading scientists in the area of fatigue are stating "hard figures" for maximum flight duty times. It is interesting to note that one of the authors is the JAA OPS Committee medical advisor, Dr Hans Wegmann.

It is also interesting to note that, since the latest proposal has been published, the definition of flight-duty period has been changed to "check-in to check-out" — a lowering of the time by half an hour. It seems that the proposals are at least going in the right direction.

To conclude: the secretary general of the JAA states that the OPS Committee believes that these proposals represent the highest level of harmonisation attainable between the European aviation authorities. The pilots say that the proposals were supposed to be a flight-safety system, definitely not an "attainable harmonisation".

The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations, therefore, remains strongly opposed to the proposals in their current form — they are unsafe and dangerous.

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...Sir — I was amazed at Mr Koplin's final sentence: "The Operations Committee believes that the proposals represent the highest level of harmonisation attainable between the European aviation authorities." Medical evidence: ignore it; pilots' views: ignore them — above all we must get agreement.

It is a shame that the Committee did not have the confidence to draw up and publish a safe flight-time limitation scheme (FTLS) and challenge the states of Europe to comply. Mr Koplin and his Committee should realise that, sooner or later, they will have to explain to an accident inquiry how they arrived at their FTLS and why the views of doctors and pilots were ignored. I am sure that no legal expert in Europe is going to be impressed with "harmonisation" as the answer.

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WHAT'S ON

Flight International Aerospace Industry Awards: deadline for entries is 24 March, 1995. Contact: Lisa Devlin, *Flight International*, Quadrant House, Sutton, Surrey SM2 5AS, UK; tel: +44 (181) 652 3315; fax: +44 (181) 652 8981.

Russian Aerospace '95 — a Flight International conference in co-operation with Aviaexport, 25-27 April. Contact: First Europe Communications, 43-45 St John Street, London EC1M 4AN, UK; tel: +44 (171) 490 3318; fax: +44 (171) 490 3319.

Safe Flight: the Enduring Challenge — 7th Annual EASS Seminar 28 February-2 March, Amsterdam, Netherlands. Contact: Flight Safety Foundation, 2200 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 500, Arlington, Virginia 22201-3306, USA; tel: +1 (703) 522 8300; fax: +1 (703) 525 6047.

20th Annual FAA Commercial Aviation Conference: Restructuring for Growth and Profitability 3 March, Washington DC, USA. **5th Annual FAA General Aviation Forecast Conference: Strategies for the New Beginning** 16-17 March, Phoenix, Arizona, USA. Contact: +1 (301) 949 7477.

The Expansion of the Remote Sensing Market — 1st International Symposium 6-8 March, Paris, France. Contact: Martina Weber, AAAF, 6 rue Galilée, 75782 Paris 16, France; tel: +33 (1) 47 23 07 49; fax: +33 (1) 47 23 89 11.

Snecma's engine core is a new-technology concept

Sir — I refer to the article "Snecma to lead CFM56-XX development programme" (*Flight International*, 25-31 January, P4).

It is indeed true that Snecma wants to develop the 200kN (43,000lb) engine core, but: ■ this core will be based upon technologies of Snecma's PAT (Plan d'Actions Technologiques) demonstrator. PAT is a new technology and not a derivative of the GE90 or CFM56-7; ■ this demonstrator will find an application for a new engine whose designation will be CFMXX (the "56" will be dropped because the core will be different). **JACQUES CARUEL**
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