

An-140 to be produced in Iran

ALEXANDER VELOVICH/MOSCOW

IRAN HAS SIGNED A DEAL with Ukraine for the licence production of the Antonov An-140 twin-turboprop, the Ukrainian Ministry of Machine Building has confirmed. Production is to be undertaken in Isfahan, Iran, where an aircraft-manufacturing plant will be completed with Ukrainian assistance.

Two prototypes of the An-140, one for flight tests and another for static-airframe load tests, are being built at the Antonov plant in Kiev. The first flight is planned for later this year.

Antonov refuses to give a more specific date, saying that it will de-

pend on "availability of full-scale financing for the programme". The wing centre-section has been attached to the fuselage of the first airframe in the assembly rig.

Wings for the prototypes are being manufactured at the Khar'kov KhAPO aircraft-production plant, where series production is intended to start in 1998. Another site under consideration for series production is the Yuzhmash plant in Dnepropetrovsk, a manufacturer of intercontinental ballistic missiles and space boosters.

The assembly line in Isfahan could get under way in 1999. Initially, assembly will be undertaken with components delivered from Ukraine. Local production of

parts and components will gradually be taken up in Iran. The overall cost of the Iranian project — including construction of the factory — is said to be \$4 billion. Most of it will be paid for in Iranian oil.

The An-140 is a high-wing regional airliner intended to replace ageing An-24s still in operation worldwide. Its range is quoted at 2,000km (1,100nm) with 40 passengers, or 1,000km with 52 passengers, at a cruise speed of 300-325kt (550-600km/h).

The aircraft is to be powered by two TV3-117VMA-SB2 turbo-propellers rated at 1,380kW (1,850hp) and will be produced at the Motor-Sich plant in the Ukrainian city of Zaporozhye. □

UK delays Swanwick opening by one year

THE OPENING OF the new en route air-traffic-control centre for England and Wales has been delayed until December 1997, says the UK Civil Aviation Authority.

The £350 million (\$530 million) Swanwick Centre, near Fareham, Hampshire, has been plagued by problems with integrating the air-traffic-management system's 2 million lines of software, which are needed to operate 23 subsystems.

Derek McLauchlan, chief executive of the CAA's National Air Traffic Services (NATS), says that he is "very disappointed", but, while it would be "...greatly desirable to keep on schedule", NATS also has to "...give way to the absolute imperative of maintaining safety standards".

McLauchlan declines to say how much the delay will cost, but he says that this will be "manageable within existing budgets". He says that Loral, as prime contractor, will not face penalty clauses, but "...will not receive payment until the system passes a series of tests".

The technical problems stem from some of the software being incompatible with the computers.

The CAA will have to upgrade several systems at the London Area & Terminal Control Centre at West Drayton, London, to cope with increased traffic levels. □



Grob has received clearance to continue with Strato 2C research

Germany reprieves Strato 2C

ANDRZEJ JEZIORSKI/MUNICH

THE GERMAN parliamentary budget committee has conditionally voted to continue funding the Grob Strato 2C high-altitude research aircraft, rejecting research and technology minister Jürgen Rüttgers recommendation that the programme be scrapped and DM72 million (\$50 million) of Government funding be returned (*Flight International*, 24-30 January).

The 31 January decision represents a new lease of life for the programme, although the possibility that manufacturer Burkhart Grob will have to repay part of the funding remains. How much the Government will demand is unclear, but Grob will get DM47 million of fresh money to bring the current proof-of-concept aircraft up to mission standards with preliminary type certification.

Grob must now come up with a

new contract to be agreed with the German Aerospace Research Establishment. Talks will begin immediately.

The new contract must meet certain conditions laid down by the technology ministry. These include price guarantees, monitoring of technical and administrative procedures by a third party, firm timescales and milestones, and staggering further funding according to proven performance.

Grob has also had to accept Government demands for a return of funds. Future income from technology developed for the programme will have to be set against development funds paid by the Government.

Grob will re-employ 60 Strato 2C workers who had been made redundant. In all, Grob gave notice to 131 staff at the end of 1995 because of uncertainty over the Strato's future. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ HAWAIIAN RESCUED

Hawaiian Airlines has completed a \$20 million equity-for-stock deal with Airline Investors Partnership and related agreements with major creditor American Airlines to reschedule \$10 million in deferred lease and maintenance payments, as well as agreeing with its employees to reduce costs by \$5 million annually over four years.

■ CREW SELECTION

A US astronaut and Russian cosmonaut have been named as part of the three-man crew to become the first to inhabit the International Space Station in May 1998. NASA mission specialist William Shepherd, Russia's Sergei Krikalev and an as-yet-unnamed Russian commander will be launched aboard a Soyuz TM spacecraft from the Baikonur Cosmodrome to establish initial man-tended occupation of the station. NASA and the Russian Space Agency have also agreed to fly two more Shuttle Mir Missions in 1998.

US Army chooses Ultra for transport

CESNA AIRCRAFT'S Citation V Ultra business jet has been selected by the US Army to fill the C-XX medium-range transport aircraft mission.

An initial award of \$8.4 million will pay for two aircraft, contractor support for one year and training. Ultimately, the US Army will buy 35 aircraft over a five-year period.

Cessna is teamed with DynCorp to provide on-site maintenance support and with FlightSafety International for pilot and mechanic training. The five-year contract is worth over \$1.2 billion.

The C-XX procurement is part of the US Army's plan to cut the number of aircraft types from the 21 now operated by active US Army and reserve-forces aviation units to a handful of types by 2015. □