

Lockheed Martin resumes European airlifter campaign

DOUGLAS BARRIE/LONDON
GRAHAM WARWICK/WASHINGTON

US AEROSPACE giant Lockheed Martin is redoubling its efforts to forge a transatlantic military-transport partnership in the wake of Germany's shock move in proposing the Antonov An-70 as the basis of the Future Large Aircraft (FLA) (*Flight International*, 15-21 October).

Senior Lockheed Martin officials believe that Germany's advocacy of the An-70 as the basis for an FLA airframe has opened the door for alternative solutions to the European requirement. They say that exploratory talks have been held with FLA partner states.

The An-70 is being championed by German defence minister Volker Rühle. His support for an An-70-based FLA has exasperated management at Airbus, which is overseeing the FLA project, and is met with little enthusiasm by other FLA member states.

The UK Ministry of Defence has been particularly unimpressed by Rühle's scheme. Whitehall sources believe that the An-70 is completely unacceptable to the MoD to meet its future airlift requirement. The An-70 has previously been considered as an FLA option, but discarded.

Besides issuing a request for pro-



Lockheed Martin harbours more than just joint-wing ambitions

posals (RFP) to Airbus for the FLA, the UK MoD also intends to release the RFP to Lockheed Martin and Boeing for alternative solutions to its airlift requirement.

Lockheed Martin and Airbus Industrie have previously held negotiations on a wide-ranging industrial collaboration, but these have so far come to nothing. Lockheed Martin, however, has not given up in its attempts to what company officials describe as the potential for a "joint partnership".

The US company is working on a future military transport aircraft under the auspices of its New Strategic Airlifter (NSA) project.

This study examines a variety of designs, including joined-wing platforms, which could address European, Japanese and US transport and tanker aircraft requirements in the first two decades of the next century.

The company believes that a joint FLA project could run in parallel with its NSA programme, with the two designs perhaps sharing common components.

There is much speculation in political circles that Germany's support for the An-70 may in part be driven by concerns that Russia and Ukraine will be unable to make debt repayments on loans. □

Arianespace orders 20 more Ariane 4s

TIM FURNISS/LONDON

DELAYS IN THE commercial introduction of the Ariane 5 have forced European commercial launcher company Arianespace to order a further 20 Ariane 4 launchers, in a deal worth \$1.5 billion.

The decision comes against a background of continued high demand for commercial launches in an increasingly competitive booster market and the lack of customer confidence to commit to Ariane 5 until it has accomplished a series of successful launches.

The launch of the European Space Agency's (ESA) Ariane 502 demonstration mission has been set tentatively for 28 October, although a delay into November is likely (*Flight International*, 1-7 October). The flight is being regarded as the most critical in the history of the European space programme.

The third ESA-funded flight of 503 is scheduled for May 1998, carrying an as-yet -unidentified commercial payload, flying at a discounted price. The first Arianespace commercial flight, the 504, could follow in late 1998.

Arianespace ordered 20 more Ariane 4s after the failure of the first Ariane flight, the 501 in June 1996, and these will have been used by 2000. The company believes that it will be necessary to keep Ariane 4s flying until at least 2002, using the second batch of 20 launchers it has just ordered, while the Ariane 5 proves itself commercially and builds customer confidence. □

Clinton veto scuttles ASAT/SR-71

THE LOCKHEED SR-71 Blackbird and the development of a kinetic-energy anti-satellite (KE-ASAT) kill vehicle (KKV) have fallen foul of US President Clinton, who used the "line-item veto" to scrap funding for both.

The funds were cut as Clinton revised the \$248 billion fiscal year 1998 defence spending bill. Funding for 13 projects was eliminated, including \$38 million for further KE-ASAT development, and \$39 million for continued operation of two Lockheed SR-71

Blackbird reconnaissance aircraft.

To avoid a confrontation with congressional leaders, Clinton did not touch funds for another eight Lockheed Martin C-130J transports that the US Air Force had not requested.

The US Congress ordered that two supersonic SR-71As, retired in 1989, be returned to service two years ago, and has funded the programme since.

An SR-71B which the USAF and NASA share may continue to be flown. □

Bombardier joins awards sponsors

BOMBARDIER HAS BECOME the latest company to become a sponsor for the 1998 *Flight International* Aerospace Industry Awards scheduled to take place at Asian Aerospace 98 in Singapore. The agreement was signed at the recent National



Business Aviation Association convention in Dallas by the Canadian firm's vice-president communications, Catherine Chase, and *Flight International's* North American sales director East Coast Robert Hancock. Award entry forms are on P38 of this issue.