

# Power demand delays Koala tests

KATE SANSFIELD/LONDON

AGUSTA HAS pushed back certification of its A119 Koala single-turbine helicopter to the fourth quarter of this year. The Italian company cites two reasons—plans to enhance the aircraft's performance in response to customer demands, and the need to concentrate on satisfying high demand for its A109 Power stablemate. The A119 was originally scheduled for approval this month.

"We are having to transfer staff from the Koala flight test programme to concentrate on producing the Power because it is so popular," says Agusta. The twin-engined A109, which Agusta claims is "the fastest helicopter of its class in the world", has attracted more than 60 orders so far and is being targeted at the emergency medical services market.

The configuration of the seven-seat, lightweight A119 Koala is now under review following feed-

back from customers. "We are keen to make improvements to the aircraft without increasing the \$1.7 million price tag for the basic model," says the Cascina Costa-based manufacturer. To date, the A119 has amassed about 300h of flight time.

The first prototype was powered by a Turboméca Arriel 1 turboshaft, but following design changes to the aircraft, the engine was replaced by the more powerful Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6B-37 turbo-

shaft, which is now installed on the two flight-test prototypes and subsequent production models.

The helicopter offers a maximum cruise speed of 140kt (260km/h), a service ceiling of 17,900ft (5,460m) and a range of more than 650km (350nm), says Agusta. "We are in the process of enlarging the total flight envelope and hope to increase the cruise speed by 10kt," adds the company.

First deliveries of the A119 are scheduled for 1999. □



The updated Be-12P-200 could be the basis for a big water bomber modification programme for Beriev

## AlliedSignal dispute Beriev Be-200 claims

ALLIESIGNAL has refuted claims by Beriev that it is responsible for new delays to the maiden flight of its Be-200 twin-turboprop amphibian. The Russian company had alleged that non-arrival of avionics from AlliedSignal, coupled with funding shortages, had stopped the aircraft making its first flight.

The absence of the Be-200 was a major disappointment at a generally lacklustre Hydroaviation show at Gelendzhik on Russia's Black Sea coast from 30 June to 5 July.

The Taganrog-based manufacturer, which is part of Sukhoi Aviation-Military Industrial Complex, has been plagued with funding difficulties. The prototype Be-200 was rolled out in September 1996 and was scheduled to make its maiden flight the following year. It took until August 1997 for the partners to obtain the finance just to pay for the Progress D-436TP turboprops—and the financial pressures do not appear to have eased.

"The money difficulties our industry is experiencing have caused



Only a model of the Be-200 made it to the show

substantial delays to our programme," says Beriev's general designer, Gennadi Panatov. "We had expected to achieve a first flight in May but we are still awaiting delivery of the systems from AlliedSignal. If we had received the system even by early June, the Be-200 would have flown at the show."

AlliedSignal hit back saying it had delivered the digital avionics to the Russian consortium which is developing the Aria 200 integrated avionics suite for the aircraft.

"We are not responsible for the non-appearance of the Be-200 at

the show," says the company.

Despite the non-appearance of the multi-role amphibian, the show played host to three other members of Beriev's line-up.

The modernised Be-128, dubbed the Be-12P-200, is acting as a testbed for the Be-200 avionics and was also demonstrated as a water bomber. Two Be-12Ps are already involved in firefighting in Siberia and Beriev reckons there are about 160 aircraft that could be modified to the new role. An A-40 twinjet was also on show while the Be-103 piston twin made its show debut. □

## FAA and Coast Guard to maintain Loran-C

THE US FEDERAL Aviation Administration and Coast Guard have agreed to keep the Loran-C navigation system in service beyond its planned termination date of 31 December, 2000 in a move which will be welcomed by the general aviation sector.

The decision, which must be approved by transportation secretary Rodney Slater, follows political pressure to keep Loran in service until satellite-based navigation is fully accepted. Keeping the ground-based network operational also increases Loran's chances of being selected as a back-up to the global positioning system (GPS) if studies now under way determine that a back-up is required.

The Coast Guard has studied keeping Loran in service to 2008 and to 2015. Both scenarios involve upgrading the 24 US ground sites with solid-state transmitters.

Costs to keep Loran in service are expected to be shared between the FAA and the Coast Guard, which carries the \$27 million-a-year burden of operating the system. The FAA is hoping to limit its share to 15%, based on the estimated ratio of aviation to maritime users of Loran, but it expects to be pushed to divide costs equally with the Coast Guard.

Sources say the FAA wants to avoid being locked into funding Loran indefinitely unless there is an aviation requirement for the system (as a back-up to GPS, for example). □