

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ BELL 427 FLIES

Bell has flown the first production Model 427 light twin-turbine helicopter. Two prototypes have accumulated over 325h flight testing, and certification is expected by year-end. Bell has more than 70 orders for the 427.

■ GALAXY IN CANADA

Jetport, a fixed-based operator at Ontario's Hamilton Airport, has been appointed Galaxy Aerospace's sales representative in Canada. Jetport operates an Astra SPX business jet and will take delivery of a Galaxy next year.

■ MOONEY EXPANDS

Mooney has expanded the upgrade activity of its factory service centre at Kerrville, Texas, to retrofit features from its current production models, such as a new interior and ice protection, into older Mooney piston singles.

■ JOINT VENTURE

Avidyne and Trimble have joined forces to market a flat-panel central flight information display for general aviation aircraft. Trimble will sell the display as part of its TrimLine avionics suite.

■ GULFSTREAM CENTURY

Gulfstream Aerospace has booked its 100th sale of the Gulfstream V long-range business jet. Almost 20 GV's are now in service. Bombardier has 80 firm orders for its Global Express, which will enter service by year-end.

■ DETECTION OPPOSITION

The US National Air Transportation Association is opposing a Federal Aviation Administration proposal to require business aircraft used for on-demand charter to be equipped with fire detection and suppression systems in Class D baggage compartments, arguing that there have been no cargo fires in such compartments.

Deliveries near as Learjet 45 receives JAA certification

GRAHAM WARWICK/WASHINGTON DC

BOMBARDIER HAS received European Joint Aviation Authorities (JAA) approval for the Learjet 45, clearing another obstacle to deliveries of the all-new light business jet.

The JAA letter of recommendation is expected to result in type certificates from most of the agency's 25 member states "within the next few weeks", says the Canadian company. The first European delivery - to an Austrian customer - is scheduled for this summer.

The European JAR 25 approval follows US Federal Aviation Administration FAR 25 certification last September. Customer deliveries were delayed, however, until Bombardier had gained approval for flight into known icing. This was obtained in May.

Modifications to aircraft already built are now under way, and the company expects to deliver six by the end of July and 35-40 by the end of its financial year on 31 January, 1999. Deliveries of the Learjet 45 are about a year behind schedule, admits Bombardier.

Some certification work remains. Approval to use the thrust



Learjet 45 deliveries are closer after JAA approval for the type

reversers on the AlliedSignal TFE731-20 engines is expected this month and certification of the optional auxiliary power unit is planned for September. Work on type approvals from other countries is also under way, with Brazilian certification due later this year.

Bombardier is gearing up for production of five aircraft a month at its Learjet plant in Wichita, Kansas. The company, which holds orders for more than 150 Learjet 45s, is targeting delivery of 60 air-

craft in its next financial year.

Production of the Learjet 31A is being stepped up to more than two a month in 1999 because of strong demand for the entry-level aircraft from Bombardier's FlexJet fractional ownership programme. The Learjet 60 mid-size business jet is also being produced at a rate of just over two a month.

About 25% of Learjet 31A and 60 sales are now to FlexJet, which holds 40 firm orders for Learjet 45s, says the company. □

Conair anxious to introduce fire-fighting C-130

CANADIAN fire-fighting specialist Conair hopes to introduce its first Lockheed Martin C-130 aerial tanker by the start of the 1999 fire season.

The Abbotsford, British Columbia-based company says it has been "frustrated" in its efforts to find suitable C-130s, or civil L-100s, for conversion because delays in the development of Lockheed Martin's next-generation C-130J have forced operators to hold on to their older aircraft.

Conair owns a diversified fleet of 52 fire-fighting aircraft and helicopters and wants to reduce the number of different fixed-wing types it operates, says president Barry Marsden. It operates

Douglas DC-6s, Conair Firecats (company-modified Grumman S-2s), Air Tractors and Piper Aerostars, plus some support types.

"We want to focus on a single, heavier, fixed-wing type, the C-130," says Marsden. The company plans to develop its own firefighting modification for the Hercules and wants to be first on the market with a conversion. "It's not a huge market, but there is some demand," he adds.

Conair is looking for either civil-certificated L-100s or military-surplus C-130Es. The latter are operated by the Canadian forces and, according to Marsden, Transport Canada has said it has access to sufficient data to enable it

to certificate a C-130E-based aerial tanker for fire-fighting operations in Canada.

"We would like to find the right model [Hercules] at the right price," says Marsden, who predicts that "the dam will break" when Lockheed Martin begins deliveries of the C-130J, due later this year. "That will affect both the availability and price of the older aircraft."

Conair, meanwhile, expects to continue operating the Firecat and the Air Tractor. Marsden predicts that the company will eventually operate the Bombardier CL-215/415 amphibious water-bomber. "We have operated the aircraft before and we hope to get back into it," he says. □