

Airbus expects bigger share of corporate business with A319CJ

MAX KINGSLEY-JONES/PARIS

AIRBUS INDUSTRIE is gearing up to take a bigger slice of the business jet market with its A319 Corporate Jetliner (ACJ), as the first one is prepared for service with UK sales and leasing company Twinjet.

Airbus vice-president, commercial operations, Paul Mason says that 14 commitments have been made for the ACJ, and that sales prospects are being improved by the reservation of delivery slots on the production line in Hamburg. "We have set aside four delivery slots in 2000 and four in 2001 to ensure we can offer customers early deliveries," says Mason.

Airbus sees annual demand for up to 24 aircraft in the ACJ category, and Mason says annual ACJ production could be expanded to 10-12 aircraft from 2002.

He confirms interest in a larger ACJ model, which could lead to development of an A321CJ (*Flight International*, 9-15 June). "We are looking at a 60-seat corporate version of the 93t [maximum take-off weight] A321-200, equipped with two ACTs [additional centre fuel tanks]," says Mason.

With a list price of \$35 million "green", plus \$4-10 million for interior completion, A319CJ demand has exceeded Airbus' orig-



The A319CJ set a distance record at Paris, as sales efforts are boosted

inal expectations. The most recent customer, Harrods owner Mohammed Al Fayed, will take delivery of his green A319CJ next May.

The first customer A319CJ is going through certification with the UK Civil Aviation Authority and will enter service with London Luton-based Twinjet in September. Owned by Kuwaiti businessman Mohamed Abdulmohsin Kharafi, it will be marketed and operated by Twinjet on worldwide charters. The 34-seater is equipped with two private lounges forward and a two-seat first class cabin aft.

Stephen Wells, Twinjet's commercial manager, says: "An annual utilisation of 200-400h is our target. We are leasing the aircraft from the owner, who will effectively charter it from us when he needs it." Twinjet aims to offer the aircraft to the corporate/entertain-

ment market for an all-inclusive rate of \$11,000-12,000/h.

The International Aero Engines V2524-A5-powered A319CJ will have a transport category certificate of airworthiness, while Twinjet is poised to receive its air operator's certificate. "The baseline aircraft can operate non-stop from London to New York, and we are planning to install auxiliary fuel and increase the engine thrust rating to enable us to serve Los Angeles non-stop," says Wells.

The setting up of an in-house charter operation represents a departure for Twinjet, and Wells believes similar deals could follow.

■ During the Paris air show, a development flight-test A319CJ arrived at Le Bourget from Santiago in Chile, after completing a record 15h 13min, 12,800km (6,918nm), non-stop flight. □

Boom ahead for business aircraft, says analyst

NEARLY 4,900 business aircraft worth more than \$62 billion will be built during the next decade, according to the latest forecast by US-based Teal Group. "After spending the late 1980s and early 1990s in the doldrums, the business jet market continues to be in the middle of a tremendous growth spurt," says Teal Group's leading analyst, Richard Aboulafia.

As predicted in its forecast last September, Bombardier will again lead its rivals in terms of market share, followed closely by Gulf-

stream, Cessna and Dassault. Although Raytheon is predicted to rank fifth, its position is expected to improve after next year, with the introduction of new models, including the Premier I and Hawker Horizon business jets. "The other manufacturers will either become niche players or be absorbed by Bombardier, Cessna and Raytheon," says Aboulafia.

Fairfax, Virginia-based Teal attributes the boom in sales largely to the introduction of fractional ownership, an unprecedented

number of new models and the "near-supply push" phenomenon which pushes up demand which cannot be sustained.

Aboulafia also links the increase in sales to the cutbacks in 19-seat regional airline services across the USA, driving private individuals and companies to transfer to business aircraft for their transportation needs.

Coupled with this, the unflattering image of business aircraft as "rich men's toys" and "admiral's barges" is being steadily eroded. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ GALAXY PLANS

Galaxy Aerospace plans to deliver nine Galaxy business jets this year, 15 next year and 18-24 annually thereafter. The company says that it has a backlog of over two years' production. Zurich-based charter operator Lions Air, which has bought two Galaxys, has ordered its second SPX business jet from Galaxy.

■ LEAR 45 IMPROVED

Bombardier has enhanced the airfield performance and payload of its Learjet 45, with improved nosewheel steering and brake-by-wire systems, a 135kg (300lb) increase in maximum take-off weight and a new approach flap setting. The 2,000th Learjet, a Model 45, will be delivered to Parker Hannifin in August.

■ JAGUAR THEME

Raytheon Aircraft has extended its successful co-marketing venture with Jaguar Cars, and plans to produce 25 Jaguar Special Edition aircraft this year - 13 Bonanza A36s, three Bonanza B36TCs and nine Baron 58s. Last year Raytheon sold 15 Jaguar-themed King Air C90Bs.

■ OMNIFLIGHT CONTRACT

Omniflight Helicopters has signed a 10-year contract extension to operate Indianapolis, Indiana's Life Line air medical programme and to refurbish its two Eurocopter BK117s. Omniflight has signed a similar deal with Billings, Montana-based Help Flight Services, which will upgrade to a Eurocopter EC135.

■ TURKEY DISTRIBUTOR

Izmir-based Soytoy Aviation has signed up as distributor and service centre for the Sino-Swearingen SJ30-2 business jet in Turkey. Its order for two aircraft takes the manufacturer's backlog to 142.