

South Korea begins missile project study

SOUTH KOREA has launched a project-definition study for a medium-range surface-to-air missile system which it intends to develop indigenously as part of the country's modernisation of its air-defence network.

The study, known as K-MSAM, is a follow-on programme to the K-SAM Pegasus (or Shunma) short-range air-defence system, entering production after a contract award last December to K-SAM partners Daewoo, Lucky Goldstar Precision, Samsung and Thomson-CSF of France.

South Korea plans to replace its Hawk air-defence batteries by around 2008. Thomson-CSF, which owns 50% of Samsung Electronics and supplies the surveillance radar and fire control system for the K-SAM, is participating in the concept definition phase for K-MSAM.

According to Bertrand Wiart, weapon-systems project manager for Thomson-CSF Airsys, the French company is proposing systems being built for the Franco-Italian SAMP/T ground-based medium-range air-defence system.

The French may face competition from US and Russian missile builders. Lockheed Martin's PAC-3 Patriot development, a Raytheon ground-based AMRAAM system, and a Russian S-300 variant could be contenders. □

Airbus stands by timetable for A3XX commercial launch

AIRBUS INDUSTRIE is sticking to its claim that it will be able to generate enough airline interest in the A3XX to achieve a commercial launch by mid-year, despite sceptical comments by some key potential customers and a pessimistic forecast from the US consultancy, the Teal Group.

The consortium plans to begin delivering the 550-seat A3XX-100 to operators in late 2005, but Teal's latest 10-year airliner deliveries forecast predicts that the market will not demand such an aircraft until 2009, when six will be required. The US consultants

believe that deliveries of the A3XX could proceed at the rate of three aircraft a month in subsequent years.

Airbus vice-president for A3XX market development, Philippe Jarry, rejects the findings, saying some airlines will begin replacing 747-400s in 2005 and that fragmentation will fail to ease demand on the most heavily travelled routes.

"The 747-400 fleet displacement process will start in 2005, when the oldest aircraft are 15-16 years old," says Jarry. "You have airlines who have a policy of replacing their aircraft early, so we believe

2005 is in line with market requirements," he adds.

Recent statements by airlines such as Lufthansa that they are unlikely to commit to the aircraft this year are due at least in part to a reluctance to publicise future fleet plans, Jarry believes.

He concedes, meanwhile, that airlines have shown "zero" interest in the proposed 480-seat A3XX shrink, designated the -50R. He believes this variant could eventually find a niche in ultra-long range markets.

Airbus hopes to launch the A3XX-100 and -100F freighter simultaneously by the end of this year, although the cargo version is not due to enter service until 2007.

While some airlines are playing down their interest, Malaysia Airlines (MAS) is strongly indicating that it wants to be among the launch carriers for the A3XX, say industry sources.

■ Hurel-Dubois has signed a framework agreement with Airbus to take up to a 2% risk-sharing stake in the A3XX. The French company hopes to win aerostructures and engine nacelle systems work on the aircraft. □



Airbus still hopes to get the A3XX in service by 2005

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Lido is setting up an aeronautical services centre in Singapore and has signed an eight-year contract to supply its Operation Centre flight planning system to Singapore Airlines.

■ ST AVIATION

ST Aviation Services, a subsidiary of Singapore Technologies Aerospace, has signed an agreement with Boeing to perform passenger-to-freighter conversions on MD-11 and McDonnell Douglas DC-10 tri-jets.

Alliance outlines GP7200 plan

THE GENERAL Electric/Pratt & Whitney Engine Alliance joint venture has outlined a development schedule for the proposed GP7200 powerplant.

Engine Alliance and Rolls-Royce have begun talks with potential A3XX launch customers as the two rival engine suppliers position to be the lead certification engine on the planned new ultra-large capacity aircraft.

"Clearly, the Alliance and R-R are going to have to adjust their schedules to see who gets there first," says Engine Alliance president Lloyd Thompson.

Based on a planned A3XX launch

by the end of the year and entry into service in October 2005, Alliance is planning to confirm the GP7200 engine configuration and begin detailed design by mid-2001. This would initiate a 30-month development programme, leading to the start of engine flight testing in early 2003 and culminating in US certification in the final quarter.

Engine Alliance plans initially for two versions of the GP7200, rated at 67,000lb thrust (298kN) for the baseline A3XX-100 and 75,000lb thrust for the heavier -100F and stretched -200. The engine would have a 2.8m (110in) fan diameter, an 8:1 bypass ratio,

and bare weight of 5,860kg (12,900lb).

The joint venture is also proposing a 68,000-74,000lb-thrust GP7100 derivative engine to power the Boeing 747-400X and -400X stretch. Boeing has yet to finalise a development schedule for the aircraft but, using GE and P&W engineering and test facilities, the Alliance claims it can support simultaneous programmes.

The GP7100 will have a smaller 2.6m fan diameter, a lower 7:1 bypass ratio and 5,130kg bare weight. Alliance says development costs are projected to amount to \$600 million. □