

First military A319CJ goes to Italian air force

JULIAN MOXON/ROME

AIRBUS HANDED over the first of two A319 Corporate Jetliners (ACJs) to the Italian air force on 7 March, the first entry into military service of an A320 family member.

Sales of the ACJ stand at 10 firm orders, with 18 commitments. Orders for the corporate variant have been slow to materialise since it was launched two years ago, but Airbus chief executive Dietrich Russel says: "We will give the competition [the Boeing Business Jet] a harder time once we have satisfied the strong demand for A320 family aircraft from airlines."

With a backlog of 1,162 aircraft to be delivered, Airbus is forced to limit A319CJ production slots to four or five a year, he says. "We're studying a further production rate increase for single-aisle aircraft beyond 26 a month, to meet demand," he adds.

The ACJ, number 1002, will replace a pair of McDonnell Douglas DC-9s in service with the Italian air force, which also operates a pair of Gulfstream IIIs, four Dassault Falcon 50s and two Falcon 900EXs. The ACJ is equipped with a head-up display, a Category IIIB landing system and CFM56-5B7 engines rated at 27,000lb thrust (120kN).

The aircraft, which was completed by Lufthansa Technik, is configured in four sections: a conference area with eight fully reclining seats; a private office with five seats, three of which can be converted into a bed, and a shower; a communications area and a 40-seat rear cabin equipped with business-class seating and overhead TV monitors.

■ This month, Jet Aviation will deliver the first of three ACJs outfitted at its Basle conversion centre, with two more to follow this year. The company delivered its second Boeing Business Jet in February and has a further aircraft on the line for delivery in the third quarter of this year. □

Aerostar seals funding for FJ-100 turbofan derivative

GRAHAM WARWICK/WASHINGTON DC

AEROSTAR AIRCRAFT is finalising funding for development of the FJ-100 turbofan-powered derivative of the classic Aerostar piston twin.

Idaho-based Aerostar estimates that it needs only \$40 million to certificate the six-seat twinjet, says president Steve Speer, because the US Federal Aviation Administration has allowed the company to modify the existing Aerostar.

Although the FJ-100 will require a new type certificate, "we can take the existing Aerostar and modify it for certification", he says.

Changes include a stretched fuselage, strengthened wing, cruciform tail, increased maximum take-off weight of 7,300lb (3,300kg) and two 1,200lb-thrust (5.3kN) Williams FJ33-1s.

According to Speer, many of the changes planned for the FJ-100 were incorporated in the sole Aerostar 800 produced by the aircraft's designer, Ted Smith.

This was his final derivative of the Aerostar 600/700 pressurised piston twin, 1,000 of which were assembled.

Aerostar Aircraft acquired the rights to Smith's design from Piper in 1991, with the intent to develop

a jet-powered version. Since then, the company has supported and refurbished piston Aerostars.

Speer hopes to have the funding in place "shortly", with deliveries to begin 30 months later. Aerostar holds refundable deposits for over 20 of the \$1.9 million aircraft. Production is planned to increase from 20 aircraft in the first year to 50-70 a year, he says.

The company plans a family of Aerostar-based twinjets, says Speer, including a four-seater costing less than \$1 million and powered by Williams' FJX-2 small turbofan, and a \$2.5 million eight-seater aircraft. □

First production Encore rolls out at Wichita



THE FIRST production Cessna Citation Encore light business jet, Model 560, serial number 539, was rolled out of the manufacturer's Wichita, Kansas, assembly facility at the beginning of this month.

Certification of the Encore is planned for this quarter, with customer deliveries to follow in the fourth quarter, both later than originally planned due to design changes incorporated early in the test programme (*Flight International*, 13-19 October, 1999).

During flight tests, more than 950h have been clocked up on nearly 600 flights on a production conformed prototype aircraft.

More than half of the flight conditions required for certification have been completed, with systems operations, aircraft controllability and stalls completed and signed off by the US Federal Aviation Administration, says Cessna.

The tests are now focused on icing and cold weather operations testing. □

Cirrus updates SR20 and increases price

CIRRUS DESIGN has upgraded the standard configuration and increased the basic price of its new SR20 light aircraft.

The 5% price increase, to \$188,300, reflects improvements to the avionics suite. The standard S-TEC autopilot will be upgraded with a global positioning system (GPS) steering function. This allows the standard Garmin GNS 430 GPS navigation system to drive the autopilot and enables more precise control, Cirrus says. A new Garmin digital transponder is also introduced.

The price increase is effective immediately on aircraft beyond the 542 Cirrus has already sold, but the upgraded avionics may be made available earlier to customers with aircraft already on order.

The company has delivered 19 SR20s so far, and hopes to ship 100 this year.

Cirrus has also introduced the first of several planned options for the SR20's Arnav ICDS-2000 multifunction display.

This option integrates the BFGoodrich Storm-scope lighting sensor into the large-format display. □