

## Keystone copped for S-76 work

**S**IKORSKY HAS selected Keystone Helicopter to undertake completion work on S-76s following the closure of the manufacturer's delivery centre at West Palm Beach, Florida.

The final S-76 to be completed at West Palm Beach was delivered last month to Finnish commercial airline operator Copter Action. There will be a hiatus until deliveries of Keystone-completed aircraft begin in the third quarter, with an S-76 for a US corporate customer.

The Florida delivery centre has been closed as part of an overall restructuring of Sikorsky's commercial helicopter programmes to improve competitiveness. The S-76 will continue to be produced at Sikorsky's plant at Stratford, Connecticut, where aircraft will receive an airworthiness certificate in a standard configuration before delivery to Keystone's facility in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Keystone outfitted six S-76s last year, mainly for emergency medical service operations. The new agreement establishes the company as the preferred completion centre for all S-76s, including aircraft for utility, corporate and multi-mission applications. Keystone will expand its completion centre, which also outfits Bell, Agusta and Eurocopter aircraft, to accommodate the additional S-76 work. Sikorsky produces the aircraft at a rate of about one a month.

FlightSafety International has no plans to move its S-76 customer training programme from West Palm Beach. □

# Online fractional sells out shares in first Hawker Jet



TransJet.com hopes to add a Bombardier 601 to its fleet soon

KATE SANSFIELD/LONDON

**T**RANSJET.COM, believed to be the world's first online fractional ownership provider, has sold all the shares in its first business jet, a British Aerospace Hawker 125-600. The company is acquiring a second Hawker and a Bombardier Challenger 601, which it expects to sell out quickly.

Fort Lauderdale, Florida-based TransJet.com, which started operations at the end of February, using nearby Binnini Island Air for charter back-up, signed an agreement with GE Capital to finance the business aircraft fleet. Garrett Krause, president and chief executive of 3wVentures.com, the frac-

tional operator's owner, says: "We seal pre-commitments for each business jet. GE provides finance capital to get the aircraft in the air."

Plans call for up to 40 city bases in the USA, each with up to two aircraft, and a London-based European service. "Our next step will be to add Los Angeles [125-600] and New York [Challenger 601] to our operating base by the end of the year. More bases will be added as the demand increases," adds Krause.

The launch of TransJet.com's Bombardier Learjet 36-based air ambulance operation has been put on hold while 3wVentures.com, a California-based internet funding subsidiary of venture capitalist

Web Capital, of Florida, focuses on the fractional programme. "We have leased out the aircraft for six months, but we plan to begin a Los Angeles-based online air ambulance operation before the end of the year."

Meanwhile, online business aircraft charter company Indigo, which began operations in early March selling seats on business jet flights between Chicago Midway and Teterboro, New York, has closed a deal on a second Dassault Falcon 20. A third aircraft is to be acquired by the end of the month.

Flightserv.com's Private Seats online business aircraft operation is to begin on 17 April, between New York and Atlanta. □

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### ■ CHARTER GENESIS

Corporate charter operator AeroGenesis has begun a twice-weekly public charter service between Illinois' state capital Lansing and Chicago's downtown Meigs Field airfield, using a seven-passenger Raytheon Beech King Air. Seats on the business aircraft are being sold through a travel agency.

## Italian force to replace Nardis

**I**TALY'S paramilitary police force, Guardia di Finanza, has begun to retire its Nardi NH500 single-engined helicopters from frontline service and is eyeing possible replacement aircraft.

The Guardia di Finanza says the NH-500s are more than 20 years old and have been extensively deployed in coast surveillance and anti-smuggling operations. The Guardia di Finanza operates 61

NH500s, which are deployed for short-range coastal missions, and twin-engined Agusta 109s as well as Agusta Bell 412s and fixed-wing aircraft for long-range patrol and surveillance missions. The Guardia di Finanza is seeking around 40 new single-engined machines.

Proposals have reportedly been received from Agusta and MD Helicopters for their A119 Koalas and MD-500s, respectively. □

## Police buy Explorers

**U**K-BASED MD Helicopters' distributor and emergency services provider Police Aviation Services has clinched an order for three MD Explorers from emergency services operators in the UK.

The twin engined, NOTAR-equipped aircraft will be handed over to the Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire air ambulance trust, as well as the Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire police forces later this year and in early 2001. □