

MAINTENANCE

Alsalam gets Marshall plan

Alsalam Aircraft has signed a deal with the UK's Marshall Aerospace to help the Saudi Arabian maintenance house develop its capabilities. The Riyadh-based company has also received contracts from the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) and Kuwait Airways.

Alsalam president and chief executive Saleh Al-Harkan says: "We can do maintenance, and the next stage is modifications and upgrades. We will collaborate on projects."

"We are looking at older [Boeing] 747s and [Lockheed L-1011] TriStars for cargo conversion, but not just Saudi Arabian Airlines aircraft," Al-Harkan says. Alsalam is looking to secure civil and military work from outside Saudi Arabia.

A first RSAF contract is worth \$345 million over three years for Boeing F-15 Eagle technical support, and the second is for depot maintenance for the same fighter, worth \$120 million.

Kuwait Airways has contracted Alsalam to perform a 747 C-check. The company recently completed its sixth 747 D-check for Saudi Arabian Airlines, which included Section 41 and pylon modification work. In December, the firm will begin major checks for Saudi Arabian Airlines' Airbus A300-600s.

Alsalam is one of five Economic Offset Programme companies formed as part of commitments linked to RSAF aircraft procurement. Al-Harkan says the company was established to transfer technology and skills to Saudi nationals.

Boeing owns 50% of Alsalam, with the rest in the hands of flag carrier Saudi Arabian Airlines and Saudi investors. It specialises in heavy maintenance and works on RSAF Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, E-3 Sentrys, KE-3A in-flight tankers, Lockheed Martin C-130 Hercules, Panavia Tornado fighters, as well as Saudi army Bell 406CS Combat Scout and Sikorsky UH-60 Desert Hawk helicopters.

RETROFITS

Boeing to offer C-130 avionics upgrade to air forces in Gulf

Meanwhile, Lockheed Martin seeks customers in region for new and used airlifters

Boeing is to begin offering its avionics modernisation programme (AMP), which it is developing for the Lockheed Martin C-130 Hercules, to Gulf region air forces. The company has also secured US Government approval to supply AMP to international customers.

Earlier this year, Boeing was selected by the US Air Force to provide the package for a large number of C-130s, beating off competition from Lockheed and others.

Mark Bass, Boeing general manager, military products business development Middle East, Africa and the Americas, says talks will be held with Middle Eastern C-130 operators, including Saudi Arabia - which has the second largest fleet after the USA - Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. "All operators in this region will be briefed by the end of the year," Bass adds.

The USAF will upgrade at least 500 C-130s, offering overseas air forces "economies of scale on their upgrades", says Bass.

He says there is also the opportunity to offer some regional air forces a combination of the C-130 AMP and a "small number" of Boeing C-17s.

Meanwhile, Lockheed Martin is offering Gulf nations new C-130Js as well as used Hercules.

Lockheed Martin director international development George Standridge says that in the near term Bahrain, which does not operate the airlifter, and the UAE are potential buyers of used C-130s, while Pakistan is a longer-term prospect.

Standridge says customers are being offered airframe refurbishments and cockpit upgrades to meet the latest air traffic management requirements (GATM).

Long term, Saudi Arabia is seen as a customer for a combination of C-130Js and the smaller, twin-engined Alenia/Lockheed Martin C-27J, which has common powerplants and systems. Egypt is also a prospective C-130J operator.

Boeing's AMP offer will also face stiff competition from suppliers offering Hercules GATM upgrades, including Derco and Singapore Technologies Aerospace (STAE).

STAE director international upgrades, James Tan, says it is offering C-130 avionics upgrades, unveiled at the show, from GATM compatibility to full avionics overhaul.

Derco has recently secured several C-130 support deals, including one to upgrade the avionics of 20 Hercules for an undisclosed customer and two airlifters operated by the Gabonese air force, which is to include depot maintenance.

BUSINESS JETS

Global 5000 bags \$230m orders

Bombardier signed a deal for two Global 5000 super-large business jets with the Execujet Aviation Group, and announced its regional distributor TAG Aeronautics as a customer for five of the aircraft.

Initially the Global 5000, which was unveiled last month, is being offered at \$33 million "green", making the deals worth over \$230 million to Bombardier. The manufacturer used the Dubai show to introduce its new product into the region where it claims it has 30% of the market.

After years of deliberation Bombardier and two of its partners, Execujet Middle East and the Alpha 55 group, are to open a service centre based at Dubai International Airport for all Bombardier business jet types.

They will spend \$11 million on the first phase of the project. The 2,000m² (21,500ft²) service centre



Bombardier handed over the first Gulf-based Learjet 60

has two bays and will be capable of housing two Global Expresses and two Challengers at the same time. It will also have an avionics workshop as well as other facilities.

Denzil White, Execujet Middle East managing director, says that the new centre, employing up to 50 people, will "significantly

reduce the cost of operation for operators in the region" who until now have had to go to Johannesburg, Singapore or Zurich for Bombardier factory-approved servicing and spares.

During the show, Execujet Middle East took delivery of the first Bombardier Learjet 60 to be based in the region.