

DELIVERIES PAUL LEWIS / WASHINGTON DC

Europeans rule rotorcraft market

Bell and MD Helicopters slip further behind Eurocopter as slump in US sales worsens, with even pistons hit hard

The slump in US-built civil helicopter deliveries deepened in 2002 with even the piston-powered market seeing a sharp drop in demand. European manufacturers have further strengthened their market share, largely at the expense of Bell and MD Helicopters.

Eurocopter delivered 320 machines in the civil/parapublic sector in 2002 and claims to have captured a 60% market share, well ahead of its nearest competitor Bell. The Franco-German company booked orders for 301 new helicopters, including 14 NH90 and 22 Tiger military machines, down on the 375 sold in 2001. While demand for the single-engined Ecureuil/Fennec remained strong with 108 sold, orders for the newer EC120B Colibri more than halved.

Bell is expected to report civil sales of just under 90 machines, down on 2001's 122. Sales of the single-engined Model 407, the twin-turbine 430 and new 427 light twin were badly hit. This was partly offset by sales of military 412s, Huey 2 upgrades and used machines.

MD Helicopters also suffered another bad year, with output dwindling to 15 machines. Chairman Hank Schaeken blames delays in delivering 13 Explorers to the Dutch and German police on having to recertify the modified machines. An order for 10 MD600Ns for the Turkish police was delayed by finance issues. The Arizona-based company was also hit by the strength of the US dollar against the euro.

Sikorsky increased output from 10 S-76s in 2001 to 13 last year, bol-

stered by offshore oil support and medevac sales. It forecasts further growth in 2004 with the start of S-92 deliveries. "There has been a 30% increase in deliveries year-on-year and we plan to increase production another 20% in 2003," says Jeff Pino, Sikorsky senior vice-president marketing and commercial programmes.

Robinson delivered 255 R22 and four-seat R44 helicopters last year, down 22% on 2001. Company president Frank Robinson blames the situation on "the general economic recession and the strength of the US dollar, which given that we export two-thirds of our helicopters has a direct impact on us. Now that it has weakened, sales are good."

Schweizer output was largely sustained by the piston-powered 300C

and CB models with only two newer turbine 333s delivered in 2002. "What we're seeing are the after effects of 11 September. The economy has hit our business hard, along with instability overseas and the strength of the dollar. It was a gruesome year," says Schweizer.

DELIVERIES 2001-2

	2001	2002
AgustaWestland	57	N/A
Bell	122	90*
Brantley	0	2
Enstrom	8	9
Eurocopter	280	320
Kaman	3	0
MDHI	28	15
Robinson	328	255
Schweizer	34	35
Sikorsky	10	13

*provisional, N/A= not available

IN BRIEF

SOVEREIGN SHINES

Cessna has raised the maximum operating Mach number of the Citation Sovereign mid-size business jet from M0.78 to M0.8 as a result of flight testing, increasing operational flexibility. Three Sovereigns have logged more than 670h, and US certification is scheduled for the fourth quarter.

EJM ADDS GV

NetJets' subsidiary Executive Jet Management (EJM) has added the first Gulfstream V to its charter fleet. The San Jose, California-based aircraft is owned by Sheridan Aviation.

'ONE-STOP' RVSM

Arinc is offering a "one-stop" service for the airframe changes, flight monitoring and approval package required for reduced vertical separation minimum (RVSM) operations, to be introduced in US domestic airspace early in 2005. Arinc has expanded its service centre and five other locations in anticipation of demand for RVSM approvals from business aircraft operators.



COCKPITS

Meggitt gets Magic approval for Conquest flight control system

Meggitt Avionics has gained certification of its Magic digital flight control system (DFCS) and electronic flight instrument system (EFIS) in the Cessna 441 Conquest, under its strategy of offering upgrades for most major twin-turboprop business aircraft. Some 300 Cessna 441s worldwide are candidates for retrofit, says the Mineral Wells, Texas-based company.

The liquid-crystal display EFIS is already approved for retrofit into the Rockwell Twin Commander series, while the Magic 2100 DFCS three-axis autopilot is certificated in the Commander 690, with approval pending in the Commander 840 and 1000, says Kenneth Paul, vice-president sales and marketing.

Meggitt has certificated a dual-sided, six-tube EFIS installation in the Cessna 441, with pilot and co-pilot primary flight and navigation displays and two engine instrument system displays. The company plans to certificate similar DFCS and EFIS retrofits for the Cessna 425 Conquest, Beech King Air 90 and 200 and Piper Cheyenne II by the end of June. "That will cover the aircraft with the largest sales potential," says Paul.

RE-ENGINEING

Garrett buys FJ44 upgrade

Garrett Aviation Services has acquired Sierra Industries' programme to re-engine early Cessna Citations with William Rolls FJ44 turbofans. The companies teamed in June last year to market the \$1.75 million conversion, which was certificated by Sierra earlier in 2002.

The FJ44 Eagle II programme modifies the Citation 500/501SP series with the Sierra-developed Eagle wing performance enhancement and replaces the original Pratt & Whitney Canada JT15Ds with 2,300lb-thrust (10.2kN) FJ44-2As. The conversion boosts maximum speed to 400kt (740km/h), increases climb rate and service ceiling, reduces fuel consumption and extends range to 3,700km (2,000nm).

Garrett, which was already offering the FJ4 Eagle II upgrade through its US service centre network, has purchased Sierra's supplemental type certificates for the Eagle modification, FJ44 retrofit and other related Citation improvements.