



AIR TRANSPORT

Turboprop tussle for Qantas deal

Australian airline launches contest to replace Bombardier Dash 8s but ATR admits race could be skewed

Turboprop manufacturers are preparing for one of the most hotly contested sales campaigns for several years as Qantas seeks bids to replace its Bombardier Dash 8 fleet.

The Australian flag carrier operates around 30 Dash 8s on regional services throughout Australia, and issued a request for proposals (RFP) earlier this month to ATR and Bombardier for the supply of 50-

70-seat aircraft to replace them. The deal is expected to be finalised quickly to allow deliveries to begin next year.

ATR senior vice-president Paolo Revelli-Beaumont confirms ATR has been invited to bid for the deal, but concedes that the installed fleet of Bombardier aircraft will make the competition with its Canadian rival's Dash 8 Q Series "tough".

Toulouse based ATR, a company owned jointly by Alenia Aeronautica and EADS, says that it has been hurt by the effects of the Iraq war and SARS, and has taken just two new orders this year – ATR 42-500s for delivery to Air Tahiti in December this year and June 2004. It has also lost five planned 2003 deliveries, following the collapse of Algerian carrier Khalifa. However it

remains confident that it will reach its target of selling 20 new ATRs this year.

The manufacturer has placed 16 secondhand ATRs so far in 2003 – about half the target set for the entire year. A new Indian regional airline – Air Deccan – is taking four secondhand ATR 42-320s this year which will be used on services in the south of the subcontinent.



MARK WAGNER/AVIATION IMAGES.COM

Testing of sub-orbital vehicle is "almost there", says company

SPACEFLIGHT

Rutan looks to space

Burt Rutan has revealed that he intends to achieve the first privately financed manned spaceflight within 12 months with his company Scaled Composites making good progress flight testing its two-stage sub-orbital vehicle (*Flight International*, 29 April-4 May).

Rutan said at the show that captive testing of the 7,700kg (17,000lb) White Knight/SpaceShipOne combination began late last month, and that testing of the second stage's specially developed hybrid rocket motor is progressing well.

"We had one test firing of 45s a couple of weeks ago, a 55s test scheduled soon, and the goal is a burn of 65s, so we're almost there," he says. All the hardware used during ground and flight tests is qualified for spaceflight, says Rutan.

California-based Scaled launched the project under the designation Tier One in 1996, and evaluated several concepts before settling on the current two-stage design, which Rutan says is the most efficient solution for a sub-orbital flight. "A high-altitude launch allows the SpaceShipOne to be just one-third the weight required for a ground launch," he says.

The high ballistic coefficient of the second stage produces an early deceleration during re-entry. "We never go above 150kt EAS [equivalent airspeed] on re-entry", says Rutan, "and the jack-knifed configuration is so stable that no pilot control inputs are required."

The fuselage temperature will reach 590°C (1,100°F) during re-entry, however, and the composite structure is protected by a paste that can be applied in a few hours. He says he will not consider entering the X-Prize private rocket competition until a successful first flight has been completed.

DEFENCE

AEW&C suppliers aim for improvements

Rival European, Israeli and US airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) suppliers are considering a range of improvements to sensors and platforms ahead of the next round of competitions kicking off in South Korea and Spain.

Boeing is looking to build on the success of its 737 AEW&C system in Australia and Turkey with an on going research and development programme. "We're looking at what's out there that can be integrated on to the aircraft and whether there are interference issues. We're looking to make the aircraft more than just an AEW aircraft," says Patrick Gill, Boeing 737 AEW&C vice-president.

Among the additional sensors being studied for the 737 AEW&C is a nose mounted multi-mode radar, a ground moving target indicator, battle management, an electro-optical/infrared sensor, an infrared search-and-track, improved electronic support measures and additional communications.

After the loss of the Australian

Wedgetail and Turkish competitions, Israel Aircraft Industries' (IAI) teaming with Raytheon using the Airbus A310 platform has dissolved. IAI has repackaged its Elta Phalcon phased array radar into the Ilyushin Il-76 and smaller Gulfstream G550, and is believed to be close to sales to India and Singapore respectively.

"Our aim is to find a balance between performance and cost and, from what we have learned, it is better to concentrate on the medium market. We're putting more effort into affordability, even if it costs you some performance," says Moshe Keret, IAI president. The company is focused on network-centric solutions to better enhance the aircraft's capabilities and is testing a range of new sensors on its 737 testbed.

Ericsson, like IAI, has not yet decided to respond to South Korea's expected request for proposals. Malaysia is understood to have selected the Swedish Erieye system for either the Embraer EMB-145 or Saab 340 turboprop platform.

AIR TRANSPORT

Three choose Rockwell Collins

Air New Zealand (ANZ) and EgyptAir have selected Rockwell Collins avionics for new Airbus aircraft. ANZ is to equip 15 A320s and EgyptAir seven Airbus A330s with communications, navigation and surveillance avionics. Kenya Airways will install Rockwell's Total Entertainment System on three Boeing 767s and three 777s, and its traffic alert and collision avoidance system on the 777s.