**MDC propfan tests complete**

**EDWARDS AFB**

McDonnell Douglas’ flight-test programme for the General Electric Unducted Fan (UDF), mounted on an MD-80 airliner, has been declared complete after 93 flights and 165hr in the air.

“The entire flight programme was extremely successful,” according to Kim Still, a Douglas vice-president and the general manager of MD-90 programmes. “We met every objective. We demonstrated that the UDF engine is both highly reliable and that it will meet or beat our projections for its fuel economy.”

Those projections talk of a fuel-consumption reduction of 35 to 40 per cent when compared with “current production aircraft of similar type”.

Still says that the flight-test work was finished with a series of ground runs, including reverse-thrust demonstrations. The maximum altitude and speed flown were 37,000ft and Mach 0.865. The engine has now been removed so that engineers can study the effects of the programme in detail.

MDC ran 20 “customer demonstration flights”, twice as many as had been planned, with a total of 110 airline executives from 35 airlines and a number of media representatives on board. None of the “customer” flights was delayed for technical reasons, Still points out, and he reports that “every passenger’s reaction was favourable. Most typical was surprise that the flight was quiet and that there was no really noticeable difference between the UHB flight and one in an airplane with turbofan engines”.

MDC is “actively marketing” the MD-91 and MD-92, propfan-powered versions of the MD-87 and MD-80 respectively, for service entry in 1991/92. Although there has been some positive reaction to this drive, no-one has yet placed an order.

- McDonnell Douglas chairman and chief executive John F. McDonnell and Douglas Aircraft president James E. Worsham met Airbus Industries president Jean Pierson at Airbus Toulouse headquarters on April 6 “to review progress achieved during the past several months of discussions between the two companies exploring all possible areas of co-operation”.

Both sides talk, rather blandly, of “progress having been achieved” in identifying collaborative possibilities.

The leaders confirmed their willingness to continue joint studies of collaboration possibilities and have agreed that “a number of specialised working groups shall continue to work together with the goal of further clarifying the various business aspects” of collaborative projects.

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**London City obstacle cleared**

**LONDON**

A proposed 244m-high office block will not be an obstacle to aircraft descending on a 53° approach to London City Airport, the UK Civil Aviation Authority has ruled. This ruling has removed one of a number of obstacles to the introduction of the British Aerospace 146 into the Stotfold.

The Canary Wharf Tower office block site lies about 4,500m from the western end of London City’s runway. The airport’s owner, Mowlem, is delighted by the decision because, following the extension of its runway, the airport will no longer be limited to de Havilland Canada Dash 7 operations.

London City Airways (formerly Eurocity Express) has campaigned for the airport to allow BAe 146 operations since the airline was launched. The 146 will connect the airport with the whole of Europe and not just with the northern European cities such as Paris and Brussels (Flight, April 9, page 8). The Dash 7 is no longer manufactured, and dependence on the one type limits the scope for expansion.

The introduction of the 146 will be determined by the outcome of an inquiry into a nearby suspension bridge which would prove an obstacle, as well as by the planning approval for a runway extension. The East London River Bridge inquiry was the longest-running road inquiry ever, the Department of Transport says, and the inspectors took more than a year to write their report. The Transport Minister has had the report for about a month, but he is not expected to make a decision for some time. The bridge’s eight-year-old design has been incorporated as 138m towers.

London City Airways is among a number of groups suggesting alternative designs that would not interfere with the 146’s glidepath into London City Airport.