Finland stands by Redigo

The Finnish Air Force has reaffirmed its decision to buy ten Valmet Redigos, in spite of a company prototype crashing on August 29 and killing Valmet's chief test pilot.

Initial investigations point to pilot error as the cause of the accident, says Finland's National Aviation Board. Because of this assessment, Valmet decided to display the remaining prototype at Farnborough, excluding spins and fast rolls from the display. According to the investigators, Valmet's chief test pilot, Maj Ari Piippo, entered a three-turn spin at an altitude which made it impossible to pull out. The pilot did not use the ejection seat.

The ten Redigos ordered for the Finnish Air Force will complement the Service's existing Valmet L70 Vinkas in the training role. The Finnish Air Force version will have the Allison 250 engine. The Redigo prototype which crashed was the Turbomeca TP319-powered version.

A320 stretch nears

"We are still talking with Lockheed about the A320 stretch," says Airbus Industrie president Jean Pierson, but, he adds, "The possibility exists to produce the stretched A320 in Europe, and a year-end decision will say when, with whom, where, and how".

A decision on how and where the stretched aircraft would be assembled will be made alongside a decision on whether the A320 needs a second production line.

Both McDonnell Douglas and Lockheed know what is being discussed with the other. If there is an agreement for co-operation with McDonnell Douglas, then there is no possibility of an agreement with Lockheed, says Pierson, alluding to continuing discussions with MDC on an MD-11/A330 hybrid, the AM300. "There is a willingness on both sides for an agreement," he says.

"The A320 stretch is not market-driven," says Airbus Industrie senior vice-president commercial Stuart Iddles. "The market is there. The decisions are on investment, production rate, partners, and research which will ensure minimum cost by ensuring minimum development."

Airbus is also talking about a less-significant stretch to its A330 widebody twin, to standardise the lengths with the A340-300. Going down the length scale Airbus is considering producing same-length A340-200s and A330-200s, the A330-200 being a new idea—an extended-range A330 with a range initially of 6,000 n.m. As engine power continues to develop, range would increase to 7,000 n.m. Given that the A330-200 would have about 20 more seats than the Boeing 767-300, it could be a serious challenger to the 767, which has had the very-long-range twin market to itself until now.

Northwest Airlines' Airbus A320s will have cockpit windows made by PPG instead of by the usual manufacturer, Triplex. The 100 A320s planned by Northwest, including six to be retrofitted after the airline takes first delivery in mid-1989, will each have six PPG transparencies.

Northwest based the decision on its long-term relationship with the US manufacturer. As a result, PPG has been named as an approved supplier for the A320's main windshields and numbers two and three cockpit windows.

Quebec launches Canadair turboprop

The Government of Quebec, home of Montreal-based Canadair, has become the launch customer for the manufacturer's CL-215T turboprop water-bomber. The contract covers the retrofit of two piston-engined CL-215s owned by the province, possibly followed by retrofitting of the remaining 17 aircraft in the Quebec fleet.

Canadair sees a market for more than 50 military CL-215Ts, shown in model form at Farnborough and proposed to Greece for anti-submarine and border defence. The manufacturer also plans to apply for US public-transport certification for the 215T.

ATR plans 100-seater

Avions de Transport Régional plans to enlarge the ATR92, which may be propfan-powered.

With the 100th 40/50-seat ATR42 already delivered and the 60/70-seat ATR72 due for its maiden flight in October, the 95/105-seat ATR92 should enter service in the next decade.

Aeritalia and Aérospatiale are already working on plans for the ATR92, says ATR chairman Roberto Mannu. "We don't know exactly what will the engine do," he says. Options include turbofans, high-speed turboprops, and the unducted fan, he reveals.

The planned ATR92 will most probably be a compromise between Aérospatiale's AS.100 and Aeritalia's VMA (vehicle medio avanzato) which is on the drawing board.

"We've not yet decided to launch the ATR92, but we are determined to develop the ATR family of aircraft," says ATR vice-president Henri-Paul Puel. "There's a definite market for the ATR92, mainly in the United States. Its speed should be around 400 knots, with a capacity for carrying 100 passengers, five or six abreast."

The market size for such aircraft, which is in the Fokker 100 class, should total more than 2,000, it is argued, with Aérospatiale and Aeritalia, if they go in together as the ATR consortium, capturing 800 to 1,000 aircraft by the year 2000.

GEC buys McAlpine

McAlpine Aviation, a leading UK fixed-base operator with diverse interests ranging from engineering to aircraft management and sales, has been sold by its construction group parent to a subsidiary of GEC-Marconi.

Most of the operations and engineering activities of McAlpine Aviation will change hands at the end of this month. The deal has been agreed "in principle", says McAlpine Aviation, which was offered for sale earlier this year.