



Above The PC-9 production line. Australia hopes that New Zealand will select the PC-9 to fulfil Project Falcon, the replacement programme for the Royal New Zealand Air Force's BAe Strikemasters

forces. The contract is expected to be awarded by the end of 1989.

Although the F-18 is entering service with the RAAF, the need to use it in a multitude of roles will involve at least one hardware and software update before the end of the century. This will provide an ideal opportunity to use the integrated approach since new avionics and weapons systems will be required, together with airframe modifications to extend fatigue life, software changes to the fly-by-wire system, and an engine upgrade or replacement. Australian industry, meanwhile, must build on the F-18 manufacturing infrastructure already funded to bid for worldwide F18 spares production and the provision of product development and support so that expertise can be accumulated for the future.

Australian aerospace companies will have to be flexible in order that they can truly claim to offer systems integration expertise. A balance must be struck between the existing mechanical, electronic, electrical, and structural sectors, expanded software capability, and improved project management capability. According to HdeH's Peter Smith, the prime contractor role for systems integration on Australian defence projects will be, "crucial to our aerospace industry's continuing relevance".

Asta is already establishing pioneering ventures in systems integration. The US Customs Service has ordered seven of Asta's Nomad-based Searchmaster II surveillance aircraft. Each aircraft will be fitted with Litton APS-504 (V)5 radars and a Flir sensor under the fuselage.

* Asta's teaming with Brooklands Aerospace Group of Salisbury (UK) to produce the Optica-based Scoutmaster promises to be an even more fruitful venture. Asta's integrated surveillance system includes a Bendix search and weather radar, a Flir, and Omega VLF navigation equipment. Scoutmaster was given its public debut at the Farnborough Air Show. The system will be evaluated by the Egyptian Border Guard, which may need

22 20-year-old General Dynamics F-111s with new avionics, and weapon control systems should be an opportunity to start the integrated approach. The Service is concerned that maintenance will become increasingly difficult by the mid-1990s and that once the US Air Force has completed its F-111 update spare parts will become scarce. The update could be satisfied by buying a US Air Force modification package or developing one in partnership with an American company.

Asta has announced that it will team with

General Dynamics to tender for the F-111 upgrade and claims that it will have a major role in design and production as well as maintaining the avionics when they are in service. Its proposal will be based on the F-111 modernisation which General Dynamics is currently completing in the USA. On the other hand, Hawker de Havilland has decided to team with Rockwell, the company that was responsible for the original F-111 avionics integration. HdeH believes that its teaming will be more complementary and preferable to two airframe companies joining