MTR390 turboshaft aims for Lynx flight

Rolls-Royce plans to fly the MTR390 turboshaft in Westland's Lynx towards the end of next year, if discussions with the helicopter manufacturer are successful.

The move puts the 1,300-s.h.p. European engine in direct competition with the Garrett/Allison LHTEC partnership, which is negotiating to fly its T800 turboshaft on Lynx.

"There is no doubt the MTR390 is competitive with the T800," says a Rolls-Royce source: "We are going to seek as much market as possible." On Lynx, the MTR390 would replace the less-powerful R-R Gem turboshaft. "We have ascertained that it will fit quite easily for the demonstration flight; we would need to modify the gearbox for a production [MTR390-powered] Lynx," the company says.

Westland has still not decided whether to spend the £1 million or so needed to flight-test the T800. LHTEC is offering to loan engines free, but declines to pay or so needed to flight-test the T800. LHTEC is offering to loan engines free, but declines to pay for the test programme.

The MTR390 is being developed to power the Franco-German PAH-2 combat helicopter and its first ground run is expected later this year.

MD-90 propfan fades

McDonnell Douglas is close to a decision on its MD-90, successor to the MD-80 airliner family, and is leaning away from proplans towards the International Aero Engines V2500 turboshaft.

"We are not going to lock up propfan technology and throw away the key," says Douglas Aircraft vice-president and general manager commercial marketing Russell Ray. "It is there, and it works well, but we are getting serious commitment with the IAE V2500—we are getting market response."

The long-planned MD-91 and 92 are essentially the MD-87 and 82 re-engined, respectively. Mentioned for the first time at Paris is an MD-93, a 183-passenger aircraft aimed at European airlines and essentially a re-engined, stretched MD-81.

More than 1,500 MD-80-series aircraft have been ordered since the type took over from the DC-9, but its old engine technology means that it is only "hanging on" in the market, says Ray. The MD-90 will take over on the Long Beach production line as soon as the market puts its money down, he adds.

RTM.322 makes Canada EH.101 bid

In a bid to power Canada's planned Agusta-Westland EH.101 shipborne helicopters, Rolls-Royce and United Technologies have revised their RTM.322 turboshaft marketing agreement.

Pratt & Whitney Canada now joins the Rolls-Royce Turbomeca team as a risk-sharing partner, giving Canadian industry a bigger stake in the programme if the European engine is chosen. "We regard it as highly important to get the RTM aboard the EH.101," says R-R military engines chief Gordon Page.

After failing to sell the European engine to the US military to power Sikorsky H-60s, the teaming arrangement with UTC's Pratt & Whitney Government Engine Business in Florida has been changed in favour of Montreal-based Pratt & Whitney Canada. "We looked at why we did not win, and decided to rethink the arrangement," is all Rolls-Royce will say.

General Electric won the US competition with its T700, and is mounting a determined bid to power Canadian EH.101s with its upgraded CT7-6A1. The US company's T700/CT7 turboshaft is powering all flight-test EH.101s.

Rolls-Royce is awaiting the Royal Navy's decision, due in October, on which engine it wants to power its EH.101s. The service has said that the 2,100 s.h.p. RTM.322 is the preferred engine, "if more power [than the 1,800 s.h.p. T700] is required," but has not yet confirmed such a need.

Rolls-Royce Turbomeca retains its marketing agreement with Pratt & Whitney and will compete to power the next batch of US Army UH-60s.

ILFC backs GE and CFM

International Lease Finance has placed orders worth $1.4 billion with General Electric and GE/Snecma joint-venture CFM International for CF6 and CFM56 engines.

The deal, together with $1 billion-worth of engine orders placed last May, means GE and CFM will power more than 70 per cent of ILFC's aircraft "on which a competing engine is offered," says GE Aircraft Engines director of airline sales, Gil Eckler. This excludes the 142 CFM56-powered Boeing 737-300/400/500s ILFC has received or has on order.

The leasing company has chosen the CFM56-5A1 to power 22 Airbus A320s on order and is tipped to choose uprated -3B8s to power the stretched A321-100s it has just ordered. The majority of ILFC's widebody fleet (747s, 767s, A310s and A330s) use GE's CF6-80 family of engines.