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Fokker 130 ready for launch...

BY JULIAN MOXON
IN AMSTERDAM

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okker is poised to launch a
130-seat derivative of the
Fokker 100 twinjet airliner
early next year.
The company says there is
"considerable interest" from
Fokker 100 operators USAir and
American as well as several
other major US airlines.
The move pits the Dutch
manufacturer against Deutsche
Aerospace (DASA) in the race to
capture a slice of a 70- to
130-seat regional airliner mar-
ket, estimated at 4,000-5,000
aircraft in the next 25 years.
DASA wants to build a totally
new aircraft of the same size
— but will have difficulty
matching Fokker's 1996 deliv-
ery target. (See adjoining story.)
Fokker also wants to launch
a 70-seat advanced derivative of
the F.28 twinjet. "We're think-
ing about building a family of
aircraft in the 70-130-seat cate-
gory," says Fokker 100 pro-
gramme manager Bernard Dijk-
huizen. Further ahead, the man-
ufacturer also plans to stretch
the Fokker 50 twin-turboprop,
to accommodate 66 seats.
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'A Fokker 130 launch deci-
sion will only come after the
company has lined up compo-
nent-building partners in the
programme. The search is com-
plicated by DASA's existing 27%
share in building the Fokker
100. "It is difficult to see that
partnership continuing if DASA
goes for its own 130-seater,"
says' Dijkhuizen.
The Dutch company is reluc-
tant to talk about Fokker 130

Fokker 130 design changes

Tail 1-3m taller

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launch dates, but cites early
next year as a possibility.
Ultimately, Fokker says it
would prefer to build the entire
family of 70- to 130-seaters,
including the Fokker 100, using
common component suppliers,
but if necessary it will forge new
arrangements with other com-
panies. "There is no shortage of
interest," says- Dijkhuizen.
The Fokker 130 would be
stretched by about 6m over the
Fokker 100 with plugs forward
and aft of the wing — itself
increased in span by about 3m
overall. Other changes include a
slightly increased tail area and
a strengthened undercarriage. A
change of engine, from the
Rolls-Royce Tay to the higher-
thrust'BMW Rolls-Royce BR700
is also mooted — probably the
BR720 which is rated in the
81kN-100kN thrust range.

Fokker is unperturbed by talk
of competition which, at the
130-seat level, includes the Boe-
ing 737-300. "We're convinced
the market is there," says vice-
chairman Erik Van Nederkoorn.
"We've always said we'll do it...
and the Fokker 100 gives us the
ideal base from which to start".

According to Nederkoorn, fi-
nancing for the project does not
depend on finding a risk-
sharing partner. "We want to
remain the prime contractor,"
he says. The project would cost
about a third of an entirely new
programme, and half of the Fll
billion needed would come
from the revolving government
fund which financed the Fokker
50 and 100, and which is being
repaid through sales of those
aircraft. "We're effectively creat-
ing our own funding," says
Nederkoorn. •

UK cutbacks hit Phoenix and Starstreak programmes
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he UK Ministry of Defence
(MoD)is to delay the pro-
curement of the Phoenix re-
motely piloted vehicle (RPV),
the Starstreak high-velocity mis-
sile and a mobile surveillance
targeting and acquisition radar.
Delays and cancellations have
also been announced for several
other naval and ground-based
systems as part of a wide-
ranging cost-cutting exercise.

The Phoenix RPV is already
two years behind schedule and
is presently in the final stages of
its flight test programme. GEC
Avionics, prime contractor on
the RPV, says the exact meaning
of the MoD's statement, made
by procurement minister Alan
Clark, is still unclear. "We have
no idea of what the implications
for the programme are. at this
stage," says the company. The

introduction of the „RPV is
viewed as vital by the Army for
its role in targeting for the
multiple launch rocket system.
Shorts, manufacturer of-the
Starstreak, is equally unclear as
to the consequences of Clark's
statement. The air-to-surface
missile is in the final phases
of a £225 million Army
development programme begun
in 1986. D

...DASA confirms

130-seat rivalry
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eutsche Aerospace (DASA)
has confirmed that it is to
build an 80-130-seat regional
jet, preferably "within a Euro-
pean partnership".
The move signals the proba-
ble end of the MPC75 regional
airliner project with China.
The company has also an-
nounced a major reorganisation
of its aircraft division, partly to
compensate for the slowdown
in military aircraft production.
The move includes the transfer
of three former DASA factories
to Deutsche Airbus (which will
be taken into complete DASA
control in 1997).
DASA aircraft division chief
Johann Schaeffler says that de-
velopment of a regional aircraft
is amongst the company's top
priorities: "We need a DASA
aircraft that the workforce can
identify with."
Schaeffler wants the partner-
ship discussions to bear fruit
before the end of the year.
DASA confirms it is still dis-
cussing an 80-130-seat regional
airliner with British Aerospace,
and with a "southern" industrial
group comprising Aerospatiale,
Aeritalia and Casa.
Last March, all DASA ac-
tivities were put into helicopter,
military, and regional-aircraft
strategic business units. "Now
we're going into details," it says.
Helicopter production will
now centre at Donauworth,
with development remaining at
Ottobrun.
Augsburg and Manching will
continue as the principle mili-
tary sites. The three factories to
be transferred to Deutsche Air-
bus are at Neuabing, Speyer and
Laupheim. •

Thorn EMI buys MEL

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horn EMI has acquired
MEL, the UK radar and
electronic warfare (EW) arm of
Dutch electronics giant Philips,
in a deal valued at around £10
million. The sale is subject to
Office of Fair Trading approval.
MEL is to be integrated into
the Sensors division of Thorn
EMI Electronics. Together they
have a combined orderbook of
nearly £200 million. •

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