

# Malaysia asks for more F-18s

THE MALAYSIAN air force has requested foreign-military sales price and availability data from the US Navy for a follow-on purchase of ten or 16 McDonnell Douglas (MDC) F-18D strike aircraft.

MDC, in response, will supply preliminary information for both a ten and 16 aircraft buy, manufactured either in fiscal year 1996 or 1997. Malaysia has until July 1995 to act on the offer, after which costing and delivery dates for the two-seat strike aircraft will be revised.

The aircraft are needed to supplement eight F-18Ds ordered in December 1993 and scheduled for delivery in late 1996 and early 1997. The \$600 million package included the supply of AIM-9L Sidewinder and AIM-7M Sparrow air-to-air missiles, AGM-84 Harpoon and AGM-65 Maverick air-to-surface missiles, laser-targeting and infra-red navigation pods and a Hughes F-18D air-combat dome simulator.

Air force chief of staff General Ghani in 1993 identified a requirement for a total of 24 F-18Ds, in addition to the 18 Mikoyan MiG-29s also on order. Malaysia is unable to fund any additional aircraft purchases until the start of its next five-year plan in 1996.

MDC has enough orders in hand from the US Navy, Finland

and Switzerland to keep the F-18C/D production line open until 1997, after which work at its St Louis, Missouri, assembly plant will be switched to the more advanced F-18E/F derivative.

Malaysia could begin taking delivery of a second batch of aircraft as early as October 1997, providing that it places an order in the first quarter of 1995 for the start of full production in 1996. MDC is offering the air force a 30-month-build time at a baseline cost of around \$30 million for each aircraft.

MDC is understood to be keen to secure a second sale before John Wolf, the US ambassador to Malaysia, leaves his post in October 1995. Wolf played a key role in promoting and selling the F-18 to Malaysia in the face of strong competition from Russia and cool political relations between Washington and Kuala Lumpur.

The company in July suffered a major setback in Asia, with Singapore's decision to order a second batch of 18 Lockheed F-16s rather than a similar number of F-18s.

It is not clear whether an air force request will have an effect on the Russian deal. Although the contract is signed, Mikoyan is struggling to meet the Malaysian performance and maintainability conditions. □

## Continental poised for weather first

CONTINENTAL AIRLINES is set to become the first airline to install an operational airborne weather-radar system with forward-looking windshear capability, following the US Federal Aviation Administration certification of AlliedSignal's RDR-4B airborne weather radar.

The RDR-4B, produced by Florida-based AlliedSignal Commercial Avionics, is the first system to receive FAA clearance to be

operated with full forward-looking windshear detection capability, say company officials at the show.

Continental was the first carrier to select the RDR-4B and is pursuing a supplemental type certificate (STC) for the various aircraft in its fleet through an earlier STC granted for AlliedSignal's Convair CV-580 testbed.

The STC paves the way for more than 500 systems which are now on order. □

## Denel in UK gun link-up

DENEL OF South Africa and Marconi Radar and Control of the UK have teamed to market anti-aircraft gun systems.

The immediate result is a marriage between the UK company's 35mm Marksman anti-aircraft turret and the G6 platform, which usually carries a 155mm howitzer. It also heralds the launch of Nemesis — an eGLAS 35mm towed gun built by LIW, allied with Marconi's Apache weapons-control radar.

The deal, initially brought about by the request of a potential customer who wanted an anti-aircraft system mounted on the wheeled G6 hull, is acknowledged

by Marconi Radar as the first step to a wider relationship between the two companies.

Neither would identify the customer — although it is believed to be either Oman or the United Arab Emirates, both G6 users. Marksman has already been sold to Finland, mounted on a T-55 tank chassis. □



G6 Marksman is aimed at the Middle East

## Avro secures orders for seven more Avroliners

AVRO INTERNATIONAL Aerospace has secured orders in the last month for seven more RJ Avroliners, from two separate unidentified operators.

Avro now has firm orders for a total of 65 aircraft, including 17 delivered in the past 12 months. Questions remain over how many of the 20 RJ70s ordered by the cash-strapped US carrier Business Express will be delivered.

Only three RJ70s have so far been handed over to Business Express and "...nobody can say if they will take all 20", says Avro

sales and marketing president, Jeff Marsh. Swedish carrier Malmo Aviation, which has five RJ85s on order, is also in financial trouble.

Avro has implemented a series of airline-driven cost-cutting improvements to the RJ series. According to Marsh, these have produced a 25% saving on maintenance and a 7.5% reduction in fuel consumption. The company is also targeting an annual improvement of 0.1% in aircraft despatch rate, to 99.5% by 1997.

Principal changes include a 680kg reduction in the aircraft's empty weight, increasing passenger payload by up to eight people.

The range of the RJ70 has been extended by 1,100km (600nm) to enable the four aircraft ordered by Air Malta to fly non-stop between London and Valetta. The maximum range of the larger RJ85/100/115 has been increased by 350km. The airline took delivery of their first RJ70 at the show.

Avro, at the request of Lufthansa CityLine, has raised the aircraft's cabin pressure differential by 10% for higher altitude cruising, while brake-energy limits have been boosted by 10% for more efficient runway performance in hot-and-high environments. □



Air Malta takes show delivery