



An-70: Antonov achieves first wholly propfan-powered take off by an aircraft

An-70 has maiden flight

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ANTONOV ACHIEVED a double first on 16 December, 1994, with its An-70 four-propfan-powered widebody transport: flying it for the first time and recording the first take-off of an aircraft powered by propfans only.

The aircraft was flown for 28min from Svyatoshino airfield in Kiev to the nearby flight-test airfield of Gostomel. Bad weather kept the maximum height down to 6,500ft (2,000m).

The An-70 was rolled out in February 1994, but the first flight has been delayed by a series of snags, including funding shortages.

The An-70 flight-test programme at Gostomel is expected to last for three months, after which the aircraft will transfer to the Flight Research Institute in Zhukovsky, near Moscow. Anto-

nov plans to exhibit the An-70 at the 1995 Paris air show.

Zaporozhye Progress is the builder of the four 10,290kW (13,800hp) D-27 propfans used on the aircraft. Propfans have previously been fitted to Russian, Ukrainian and US aircraft, but only in test installations on conventionally powered aircraft.

The An-70 was developed originally to meet the requirements of the former Soviet air force. In spite of the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia appears to be committed to procuring the Ukrainian aircraft. A high-ranking Russian air force delegation attended the ceremony before the first flight. The group was headed by Lt Gen Svyatoslav, the service's chief of acquisition.



The An-70 may replace the An-12 Cub

The position is clouded, however, by the continuing work being undertaken by Tupolev on the rival Tu-330 twin-turboprop freighter which is due to be flown in 1996. Like the An-70, it is intended to be a replacement for the Antonov An-12 Cub.

An agreement between Russia and Ukraine, signed in June 1993, calls for production of 500 aircraft at plants in Kiev and Samara in Russia. Antonov predicts that production will last for 15 years and total 1,500 aircraft. □

Ariane launches to resume

ARIANE LAUNCHES are to be resumed in mid-February. Arianespace made the announcement following the release of the findings by the official inquiry into the loss of the Ariane V70 and its PanAmSat 3 payload on 1 December, 1994 (*Flight International*, 14-20 December, 1994).

The inquiry found that the failure was caused by inadequate thrust on the Ariane third stage because of low turbopump gas-

generator pressure, caused by an "insufficient supply of oxygen gas". The report says that this probably resulted from an inhibition of the oxygen flow; possibly caused by a leak in the oxygen-feeding circuit.

Corrective action will be taken to reduce the risks of flow blockage and leaks and, following qualification, a filter will be added at the input of the liquid-oxygen injection unit. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ CESSNA DECISION

Cessna has selected Independence, Kansas, as its new site to restart piston-single production in the wake of the US Government decision to ease product-liability legislation. The company expects to build some 2,000 aircraft in the first year of full production; mainly 172s and 182s.

Continental to retire A300s

CONTINENTAL AIRLINES is to retire its fleet of 21 Airbus A300s in a bid to reduce capacity to 10% below 1994 levels by 1 March. The airline had previously announced the grounding of four Boeing 727s and three Boeing 747s in a move to improve financial performance.

The Houston, Texas-based airline hopes to save \$150 million annually through capacity cuts and service reductions. Boeing 737s and McDonnell Douglas MD-80s will be used in place of the A300s. Continental's capacity grew by 10% in the fourth quarter of 1994, compared with the same period in 1993, but demand grew by less than 5%. □

Russian Grumble reaches US Army

THE US ARMY has acquired a Russian S-300 (SA-10 Grumble) air-defence system for evaluation. The S-300, Russia's equivalent of the US Raytheon Patriot surface-to-air missile system, is believed to have been purchased from Belarus in a \$50 million deal brokered by US defence firm BDM International, despite Russian objections.

Equipment flown aboard a Volga-Dnper Antonov An-124 to the Army's Redstone Arsenal at Huntsville, Alabama, on 19 December, 1994, is believed to consist of S-300 launch and fire-control vehicles. The US Defense Intelligence Agency unit which analyses foreign missile-systems is based at Redstone.

The US Department of Defense admits publicly only that it has "...worked to acquire a piece of equipment that is in the arsenals of several countries", and that the equipment was "...acquired under contract" for evaluation. Pentagon officials confirm that it is an SA-10 air-defence system.

The An-124 was unloaded before dawn on 19 December. Attempts by a Canadian firm to acquire S-300 systems from Belarus were reportedly blocked by pressure from the Russian Federal Counter-Intelligence Service. □