USA advances Lorcan C phase-out

**GRIMAH WARWICK/ATLANTA**

THE USA HAS brought forward the date for phasing out the Lorcan C radio-navigation system from 2015 to 2000, a move strongly opposed by the general aviation (GA) community. The US Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is lobbying for the system to remain operational at least until 2010.

The new date is included in the much-delayed 1994 Federal Radio Navigation Plan, which was finally published in early July. The Plan is a joint US Department of Transportation (DoT)/Department of Defense document which is revised every two years.

The 1994 Plan is believed to have been delayed by a dispute within the DoT between the US Coast Guard, which operates Lorcan, and the US Federal Aviation Administration, which helps pay for it. The FAA is pushing for ground-based Lorcan to be retired early in favour of the satellite-based global-positioning system (GPS).

AOPA is arguing that thousands of GA operators who have bought Lorcan units based on the 2015 phase-out date will not see a return on their investment if the system is decommissioned in 2000. Steve Brown, senior vice-president for Government and technical affairs, says that the Lorcan is “very cost-effective” and a “viable back-up” for the GPS.

AOPA's position is that the FAA's wide-area augmentation system, which will allow GPS-only en route navigation and non-precision approach, will not be fully operational before 2000, and precision approach GPS will not be available before 2005, Brown says.

The House Appropriations Committee, meanwhile, has added conditions to the 1996 budget, calling for the FAA to conduct a comprehensive study of Lorcan with a view to the possibility of the FAA taking over operation of the system from the Coast Guard and keeping it in service beyond 2000.

Brown is confident that the Senate will follow suit.

Twin Commander launches rebuilds

**TWIN COMMANDER AIRCRAFT (TCAC)** has introduced a programme to rebuild 690-series Twin Commanders to as-new condition. Two “Renaissance Commanders” have already been sold and a restored aircraft will be exhibited at the US National Business Aircraft Association convention in September.

The factory-authorised rebuild is the latest in a series of upgrades for the Rockwell-designed Twin Commander which have been introduced since TCAC acquired the rights to the aircraft from Gulfstream Aerospace.

An engine upgrade for AlliedSignal TPE331-powered 690-series turbine Commanders, approved in 1994, has attracted 20 customers so far, says TCAC.

TCAC’s service-centre network work is working on improvements, including four-bladed McCauley propellers and S-TEC autopilot. Flight-tests of a Lord active noise-control system have demonstrated a 10dB reduction in cabin noise, according to TCAC.

The company says that the “heavy wave” of airworthiness directives, which had previously hurt the Twin Commander’s reputation, is now past.

Embraer signs marketing deal with PZL

**EMBRAER HAS signed a cooperation agreement with Polish manufacturer PZL-Warsawa-Okecie.** Details are still being worked out, but the memorandum of understanding covers marketing of PZL general-aviation aircraft in Brazil and the sale of Embraer EMB-120 Brasilia regional airliners to Poland.

Under the agreement, Embraer's light-aircraft subsidiary Neiva will market the PZL-106 Kruk agricultural, the PZL-104 Wilga utility and the PZL-111 Koliber training/touring aircraft. Neiva already produces the EMB-201 Ipanema agricultural aircraft, but the PZL-106 is larger and is available with turboprop power,

Embraer points out.

In return, PZL-Okecie subsidiary Skypol, which operates freight and charter services using Fairchild Metros, will acquire Brasilias. Embraer says that no certification bilateral exists between Brazil and Poland, and re-certification of the PZL-built aircraft in Brazil may be required.