

# GE/Airbus sign for A340-600

JULIAN MOXON/PARIS

GENERAL ELECTRIC and Airbus Industrie have signed an exclusive agreement on power for the stretched A340-600, due to enter service early next century.

The deal foresees the development of a new or derived 226kN (51,000lb)-thrust engine for the 375-passenger, 13,000km (7,000nm)-range aircraft. GE says that it is studying options which range from a development of the CF6, incorporating technology from the GE90 and other programmes, to a brand-new powerplant.

The announcement has taken many by surprise, since GE's CFM International partner, Snecma, had been advocating the new 191kN CFMXX as the likely engine for the stretch A340. The French company wanted to lead the programme with development of the all-important high-pressure section (it has been responsible for the low-pressure section in its 50:50 CFMI relationship). GE

refused to agree to the request, effectively killing the CFMXX.

Further disagreement between GE and Snecma over pricing on the GE90, and between Snecma and Airbus over pricing of the CFM56-5 for the A340, have left the French manufacturer out in the cold.

Snecma president Bernard Dufour refuses to lower the price of Snecma-supplied CFM56s, making it difficult for Airbus to offer the aircraft against the Boeing 777, where a cut-throat competition between GE, Rolls-Royce and Pratt & Whitney has forced down prices and helped Boeing to win several competitions. As a result, Snecma was recently accused of "killing the A340" by Airbus chief Jean Pierson.

Airbus has also gone further than expected in growing the A340, which will, if launched, now be stretched by as much as 20 frames, placing it in a new thrust category outside the 225.5kN upper limit agreed in the CFMI partnership.

While this does not exclude Snecma from eventually joining the programme, GE has rejected the idea of French leadership.

Another surprise was that the agreement was made with GE and not P&W, whose new Advanced Ducted Turboprop had been touted as the powerplant for the stretch A340 (*Flight International*, 27 March-2 April).

GE, which had been Airbus' exclusive partner on the original A300, says that it has "the lowest costs in the industry", claiming that this means that it will be able to offer Airbus highly competitive pricing, despite the lack of engine competition on the A340-600.

It adds that an exclusive deal was "...the only way we were going to work on the -600". The cost of developing an engine for one application could be justified only if there were no competition, adds the company.

Other applications may appear, including a possible re-engined Boeing 757. □

## New joint Czech-Polish commission will study modernisation

THE CZECH REPUBLIC and Poland have established a joint commission to study the modernisation of their air forces. A joint purchase of new fighter aircraft is one option under consideration.

The countries' ministers of defence and foreign affairs signed an agreement on 13 April, allowing closer co-operation between the military establishments, including setting up a joint commission to study problems plaguing the countries' air forces.

"We were inspired by the results of the joint Czech/US Commission which studied the same problems," says the Czech defence ministry.

The Polish press has also reported that the two countries could co-operate in the jet-trainer field. The Czech Republic is considering orders for an upgraded version of the Polish PZL-Swidnik W-3W Huzar military helicopter, with Western avionics and weapons. □

## Swidnik signs helicopter-partnership deals

ANDRZEJ JEZIORSKI/MUNICH

SOUTH KOREA'S DAEWOO is to buy 35 Polish PZL-Swidnik W-3 Sokol helicopters, and to co-operate with Swidnik in production and marketing of the type. Swidnik is also co-operating with Italy's Agusta on production of the A109 helicopter.

A memorandum of understanding was signed by Swidnik and Daewoo on 13 April, initially calling for the South Korean company to market and sell the helicopters in Asia and to assist in production.

Sources in Seoul say that the agreement could be extended to allow final assembly of the machines in South Korea, if sufficient orders are secured. The deal covers the standard W-3 model, as well as future upgrades. PZL-Swidnik says that the helicopters are to be delivered to Daewoo within five years, the first at the turn of the year.

Swidnik has also been awarded a contract by Agusta to manufacture 150 fuselages for the A109 Power



Swidnik woos Daewoo with W3

between 1996 and 2002.

Three fuselages assembled from Italian components are to be handed over to Agusta this year. From 1997, the manufacture of airframe components will be transferred progressively to Swidnik, which expects to complete 15 fuselages in 1997, rising to 30 a year.

Daewoo's plans to develop and produce jointly an upgraded variant of the Mil Mi-17, in co-operation with Russia's Mil design bureau and Kazan Helicopter Production, has stalled over the issue of international rights to the helicopter. □

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### POPEYE DOWN UNDER

Australia has selected the Rafael Popeye missile as its air-to-surface stand-off weapon. The Israeli-built Popeye — which was also recently selected by Turkey — beat the Rockwell AGM-130 to a deal to fit the weapon to Royal Australian Air Force General Dynamic F-111s. Rafael and the Australian Ministry of Defence decline to comment, but Rockwell says that it has been told informally of the decision.

### AIR MALTA BRANCHES OUT

Consistent profit maker Air Malta plans to set up an airline in Italy, taking a 49% share in the new carrier, which would be called Azzuro Air, according to Air Malta chairman Joseph Tabone. Remaining shares would be held by Italian businesses, he says, and permission to operate has been filed with the Italian authorities. Azzuro Air will serve destinations in France, Germany and Switzerland, says Tabone.

### RYBINSK CANCELLATION

Rybink Motors has withdrawn its appeal to Russia's Supreme Court, in which the engine company disputed the Government's decision to auction 37% of its shares. Rybink says that the legal move lost its meaning after the Government issued a new order including Rybink as being of strategic importance to national security.

### PLANT ARREST

Uzbekistan National Security Service has arrested Vasily Zhuravlev, general director of the TAPO Tashkent Chkalov plant, which produces Ilyushin Il-76s. Police are investigating an alleged fraud in which the plant accepted an Il-76 for repair from a Russian operator. It is accused of repairing the aircraft and leasing it unlawfully to another operator.