NEWS IN BRIEF

■ DOWTY RINGS UP ORDERS

Dowty Aerospace has won two contracts worth a combined $25 million, covering the supply of engine rings for CFM International CFM56, General Electric CF-6 and Pratt & Whitney JT8D engines. The first is a four-year contract from Norsk Jetmotor, a CFM56 subcontractor, for the production of rolled rings for low-pressure turbine cases on the CFM56-5B and -7B. The second contract was awarded to Dowty's Lewis & Saunders subsidiary by Volvo Aero, to supply rigid tubes for the GE CF-6 and P&W JT8D programmes.

■ BRAKE OUT

China Southern Airlines, Airtours of the UK and Denmark's Premiair have selected Messier-Bugatti Sepcarb III third-generation carbon brakes worth $20 million for their Airbus A320 fleets. China Southern will take delivery of ten aircraft in 1997, while Airtours and its subsidiary Premiair will retrofit their fleets. Air China, meanwhile, has ordered Messier-Bugatti carbon brakes, worth more than $4 million, for its Airbus A340-300Es.

Park Air unveils VHF digital radios ATC

PARK AIR ELECTRONICS has launched a range of next-generation digital radios, aimed at coping with steadily increasing demand for voice and data communications between aircraft and air-traffic-controllers (ATCs), using existing very-high-frequency inks.

The UK company's new Series 5000 digital radios use so-called differential eight-phase shift-key modulation, replacing double-sideband modulation, with channel spacings of 25 or 8.33kHz. In time-division multiple-access mode, the radios can provide four simultaneous voice or data channels to and from four aircraft on a single channel frequency. ❑

Growth versions of the A3XX will take off with more than 1,000 passengers on board

A3XX will 'seat 1,000'

SEATING FOR more than 1,000 passengers will be possible aboard growth versions of the Airbus Industrie A3XX, according to Jurgen Thomas, senior vice-president for the consortium's Large Aircraft division.

Thomas says that, when it enters service in 2003, the A3XX will be the "world's largest airliner, and the first with twin-aisle seating in both upper and lower decks". Very large aircraft "...will be the only way of carrying more passengers without building new airports or extending those which suffer from congestion today", he adds.

Airbus is resisting pressure from Boeing, which is close to launching its stretched 747-500/600, and is keeping to its original launch date of "some time in 1997" for the A3XX. The consortium says that it "...will not be rushed" into a premature launch, and that it sets greater store on achieving the right solution for airlines. "Once wrong, ever wrong," says Thomas. As it now stands, the A3XX fits within an 80 x 80m box, to enable the aircraft to be accommodated by the new 80m-span departure gates planned at new airports and terminals, say Airbus officials at the show. The wing will be around 40% larger than that of the Boeing 747-400, and primary structures in carbonfibre composites will include the wing outboard of the outer engines, the fin and horizontal tailplane. "The big challenge will be the dimensions of these structures," says Thomas, "considering that the horizontal tailplane alone will be of a similar size to the entire A310 wing."

The A3XX cockpit will have full commonality with the existing A320/A330/A340, so that operators can benefit from full cross-crew qualification between all modern Airbus types.

The aircraft will also have a variable-camber wing which, Thomas says "...has reached maturity for introduction". Laminar flow for the wing is also being evaluated, although Thomas admits that "...it may be too early to embody this technology".

There are, says Thomas, "no technical showstoppers" to the A3XX. He adds, however, that "...we must be convinced that it will make money for its investors before we finally build it". Airbus is optimistic that it can show savings of 30% through its cost-reduction programme, but says that it remains "aware of the risks, such as low production rates during economic recession".

Thomas adds that it is "obvious" that the $8 billion investment for the A3XX will require a broadening of the current four-nation partnership. "It is certain that the programme will see new entrants from Europe, the USA and the Far East," he says. Airbus admits that none has yet been signed up. ❑

UK police forces order MD Explorers

THE UK'S POLICE Aviation Services has ordered ten McDonnell Douglas MD900 Explorer helicopters, making it the largest single purchase of the type to date in Europe.

The first eight-seat helicopter will be delivered in June 1997 and enter service with the Wiltshire Constabulary Air Support Unit. The aircraft will be used for police work and air-ambulance services. Three more will be delivered in 1998, with the balance to arrive over subsequent years.

The UK announcement takes firm Explorer sales to around 70. The European Joint Aviation Authorities (JAA) certification of the Explorer in mid-July has now been ratified by 11 European agencies, including the UK Civil Aviation Authority. Additional international certifications received separately from that of from the JAA include those from Japan and South Korea.

The aircraft was certificated by the US Federal Aviation Administration in December 1994. ❑