

Second Comanche flight completed

BOEING SIKORSKY has completed the second flight of the first prototype RAH-66 Comanche scout/attack helicopter, some seven months after the first flight. The 54-min flight took place at Sikorsky's West Palm Beach, Florida, flight-test centre on 24 August. The first flight took place on 4 January.

The second flight was delayed after a gear failed in the propulsion-system testbed, a ground-based test rig for the Comanche dynamic system (*Flight International*, 7-13 August, P17). Sikorsky says that the resonance which caused the input bevel-gear to disintegrate is still being investigated, but tests have determined that the aircraft can be flown safely, but with a power limit to avoid encountering the resonance in flight.

This will allow the flight envelope to be opened up to a forward speed of 160kt (300km/h), the manufacturer says. On the second flight, the aircraft was flown to 20kt forward airspeed, and 10kt rearward, and was put through hover manoeuvres, completing a total of five take-offs and landings. A new transmission is to be installed in November, enabling the flight envelope to be expanded fully. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ KRYPTON FACTOR

A modified Zvezda Kh-31 (AS-17 Krypton) anti-radar/anti-ship missile was successfully used as an aerial target on 13 August at the US Naval Air Warfare Center's missile test range at Point Mugu, California. The missile has been modified into the MA-31 supersonic target by a team from Russian manufacturer Zvezda, McDonnell Douglas (MDC) and the US Navy. For the test, it was dropped from a US Navy MDC QF-4 before descending to 1,000ft (300m). It then flew straight and level at speeds "approaching Mach 2.4" and performed a series of 10G lateral manoeuvres.



USAF tests AGM-154B JSOW

THE US AIR FORCE has carried out a guided test launch of the AGM-154B Joint Standoff Weapon (JSOW) from a Lockheed Martin F-16D. The first guided test, flown from Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, was carried out at the end of July. The AGM-154B warhead consists of six BLU-108.

Congress digs its heels in over Pakistani F-16s for Indonesia

MEMBERS OF THE US Congress are threatening to block a \$160 million sale to Indonesia of nine former Pakistani Lockheed Martin F-16A/B fighters, because of concerns about human rights in Indonesia.

Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy has warned US Secretary of State Warren Christopher that the proposed sale could face Congressional opposition.

The move follows the Indonesian Government's recent political crackdown against local opposition parties.

US officials remain confident that the sale will be allowed to proceed, however, having enlisted the personal support of US President Bill Clinton.

The US Administration is keen to use the F-16 deal to heal relations with Jakarta, which were

damaged in 1993 after an earlier Northrop F-5E/F deal had been vetoed by the USA.

An Indonesian source close to the negotiations expects the deal to be finalised within the next 30 to 60 days, after overcoming a last-minute financing delay.

The deal includes \$25 million-worth of structural and engine modifications and a \$15 million missile package. □

Thailand buys Basler turboprops

THAILAND HAS ordered three Basler Turbo-67 turboprop re-engined Douglas DC-3s for use in a rainmaking programme. The first aircraft will be delivered to the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) in January 1997, and the remaining two by the middle of 1997.

Oshkosh, Wisconsin-based Basler says that Thailand is its first BT-67 customer located in the Pacific-Rim.

The US company expects additional RTAF orders for rainmaking and other Government projects. The BT-67s can carry up

to 5t of rainmaking chemicals and are expected to be used almost continuously during the cloud-seeding season, Basler says.

The remanufactured DC-3s, powered by Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A turboprops, are already in service in Bolivia, Colombia, El Salvador and Guatemala, and aircraft are also used by the US Forest Service and other commercial operators.

Basler has a long-term agreement with the US Air Force, which it signed in 1995, under which BT-67s are supplied to foreign air forces. □

US Navy scores with SLAM software test

DIRECT HITS have been scored in three launches of the McDonnell Douglas (MDC) Stand-off Land Attack Missile (SLAM) in a demonstration of new automated mission-planning software. Aircraft from three US Navy MDC F-18 squadrons fired the missiles during training exercises at the Point Mugu, California, test range in August.

The exercise involved three "shooter" F-18s and three control aircraft carrying AWW-13 data-link pods. One shot was carried out at night. □