

Paris '97 will go down in the aviation history books as the "nearly" show. AI(R) nearly launched the AirJet, Boeing nearly launched the 777X and Embraer nearly launched the EMB-135. In the event the strategists had a field day and good news was largely left to the sales departments of companies such as Airbus, Bombardier, Cessna and Embraer. *Douglas Barrie, Andrew Chuter, Guy Norris, Max Kingsley-Jones, Julian Moxon, Guy Norris and Allan Winn report. Design and production by Alexis Rendell and Chris Thornton, photography by Mark Wagner*

Jordanian raises new capital to fund fleet

ROYAL JORDANIAN has completed an important re-financing package of its Airbus A310 leases which will provide capital to fund the acquisition of new long-range twinjets in 1998.

The airline, which says that it has a desperate need to update its long-range fleet of five 220-seat Lockheed L-1011 TriStar 500s, has signed new lease deal for its four A310-300s to reduce substantially its monthly lease rentals. This will boost cash flow to provide the capital to restructure the fleet.

Royal Jordanian says that it is carrying out an evaluation of the long-range, medium-capacity types, including the Airbus A330-200 and Boeing 767-300ER, and expects to decide before the end of the year. The airline is seeking four aircraft for delivery from 1998.

The lease restructuring involves a new joint venture including Thomson-CSF and Aerospatiale, and is supported by Airbus. □

AI(R) and Embraer start talks on joint 70-seat regional-jet

AERO INTERNATIONAL (Regional) (AI(R)) and Embraer are holding talks on the possible joint development of a 70-seat regional jet. The companies have separate projects on the drawing board for regional aircraft, although uncertainties over their viability has been delaying progress towards a launch.

Embraer chief executive Mauricio Botelho confirms the talks. He says: "We have had loose dialogue about the issues of the 70-seat regional-jet market, such as the need to look closely at the economics...and whether there should be two or three players".

AI(R) declines to comment officially, although one source confirms that discussions are under way, claiming that one of the issues being looked at is joint marketing

of the 50-seat Embraer 145.

News of the talks comes as the expected launch of AI(R)'s AirJet 70 has been delayed because of doubts among consortium members Alenia, Aerospatiale and British Aerospace on risk-sharing and programme prospects. Potential customers have also demanded significant changes to the design.

AI(R) president Patrick Gavin says: "We have not yet convinced our board that it is the right time to go ahead. We have been asked to offer a more consistent and comprehensive proposal."

Embraer is not expected to decide on the launch of the EMB-170 before the end of the year. Botelho admits that the \$450 million cost of the programme requires "careful scrutiny". Gavin says that one of the AI(R) board's demands is

that AirJet should be the "focal point" of the rationalisation of the regional-aircraft industry.

He confirms that several potential suppliers for the aircraft are "very sensitive" about the financial returns on the project following tough conditions from AI(R) on risk-sharing and initial funding to cover non-recurring costs. British Aerospace, in particular, is worried about risk exposure following its experience with the BAe146.

Questions have arisen after talks with potential customers who have demanded design changes. As a result, the fuselage, based around that of the ATR 42/72, has been circularised, and the original ATR 72 rear fuselage redesigned. Operating weight has also been increased, to allow range to rise by 370km (200nm), to 2,200km. □

Dasa leads push for European fighter demonstrator

DAIMLER-BENZ Aerospace (Dasa) is trying to pull together a European partnership to develop and build a technology demonstrator leading up to a pan-European combat aircraft.

Dasa military aircraft division president Aloysius Rauen says that the company has been studying a concept known as the Flying Technology Platform (FTT).

Programme sources say that the company hopes that the concept will lead to the construction of a piloted test vehicle incorporating advanced technology developed by Dasa from other programmes.

Rauen says that the FTT builds

Germany's FTT concept



on Stealth technology developed in the last decade for the secret Lampyridae (Firefly) fighter concept,

and will include an advanced fly-by-wire system and vectored-thrust technology which has been

developed from the German/US X-31 programme.

The project is also believed to incorporate radar-absorbent materials which are now under development by Dasa, and already set to be incorporated in the Eurofighter EF2000. The EF2000 DA5 prototype is the first flying testbed for this technology. The demonstrator will also be used to explore the use of modular avionics.

Rauen says talks are under way with potential European partners and the German Government to transform the programme, which began on a national basis, into an international effort. □