

Heathrow business operators fight on

KATE SANSFIELD/LONDON

BUSINESS JET operators at London Heathrow Airport have suffered a further setback in their fight for improved treatment at Europe's busiest hub, following the loss of a court appeal against slot co-ordinator Airport Co-ordination (ACL).

The Heathrow Executive Jet Operators Association (HEJOA) failed to convince the appeal court judges that the new tactical slot allocation procedure introduced by ACL on 6 May last year is unlawful and unfairly restricts its access to the airport.

"The judges decided that the slots concerned were not part of declared capacity and are therefore not governed by European Union regulations," says HEJOA. The association's claims that the system was introduced without adequate consultation was also dismissed by the court.

"The judge also refused our request to refer the issue to the European Court of Justice, but we

will fight on and are considering taking our protest to the House of Lords," adds HEJOA.

The legal wrangling between ACL, which is governed by 12 UK-based airlines, and HEJOA, has continued for nearly a year. The first court case was heard last July.

The association believes that operations have become restricted since the introduction of tactical availability, whereby business aircraft operators have to apply for slots up to 18 days in advance. "We are not given the chance to use the natural gaps on the runway any more because the slots are not reviewed after 06.30. We are left with the scraps," says HEJOA.

ACL managing director Peter Morrisroe believes the system was designed to alleviate congestion at the airport. He says: "Our aim is not to drive out business aircraft operators, but we have a legal duty at our airports to administer UK and European law in the distribution of traffic in a neutral, transparent and non-discriminatory way. Don't shoot the messenger." □

Eurocopter/Kawasaki fly EC145

EUROCOPTER and Kawasaki have begun test flights of the EC145 medium utility helicopter, a successor to the jointly developed BK117 twin turboshaft.

The manufacturers decline to reveal programme details, but the helicopter is understood to be a development of the BK117, incorporating some cockpit and forward fuselage features of the Eurocopter EC135. The new aircraft was previously known as the BK117 C-2.

According to sources close to the programme, the helicopter will have a maximum take-off weight of 3.5t-150kg (330lb) more than the BK117 B-2 - and will accommodate up to 13 people, including the crew. The aircraft is powered by two Turboméca Arriel 1E2 turboshafts and will feature a new-generation cockpit that allows the

use of night-vision goggles. Range will be about 700km (380nm) and the aircraft can hover at altitudes exceeding 15,400ft (4,700m), even in crosswinds.

Eurocopter is understood to have a slightly greater workshare in the programme than Kawasaki, which will be responsible for the aft section of the aircraft, according to programme sources.

Last August, the French interior ministry placed a \$170 million order for 32 of the helicopters for use by its civil guard for transportation and rescue roles. These aircraft will be delivered from next year to 2005, replacing a fleet of Aerospatiale Alouette IIIs. Eurocopter is understood to be planning to publicise the programme at the US Helicopter Association International show in February. □



The crash aircraft did not have Cirrus' parachute system

Cirrus alters SR20 design after NTSB crash report

CIRRUS HAS ALTERED the design of its single-engined SR20, following the release of findings by the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) into the fatal crash on 23 March of the first production aircraft.

Safety investigators found signs of interference between the right aileron and the right wing which, they claim, may have precipitated the loss of control leading to the accident. The NTSB also believes that the rub marks on the wing indicate that the interference worsened as the wing flexed.

Cirrus test pilot Scott Anderson announced he was having a control problem shortly after launching the second test flight of the first production SR20 from Duluth International Airport, Minnesota. On approach to the airport, he declared an emergency.

After a series of left-only turns

and a failed landing attempt, the SR20 crashed into a federal prison. Anderson was killed in the accident. The aircraft did not have the Cirrus Airframe Parachute System, standard on production aircraft.

Following the investigation, Cirrus has increased the clearance between the wing skins and the aileron leading edges. The rear of the wing and part of the aileron have also been modified to remove potential hazards, says Cirrus.

The crash has failed to dampen interest in the four-seat, 160kt (300km/h) aircraft, as Cirrus has chalked up a further 50 orders since the accident, bringing the backlog to around 315. The company has recently increased the SR20's price tag by a further 10%, to \$179,400.

"Certification and the first two customer deliveries are planned for this month. There are six other SR20s in assembly," says Cirrus. □

Eagle 150 popularity soars in North America

AUSTRALIA'S EAGLE Aircraft has started to export its two-seat Eagle 150 to its US subsidiary, less than six months after the single-engined aircraft was granted US certification.

According to the Orlando, Florida-based company that will assemble the Teledyne Continental IO-240-powered aircraft for the North American market, orders "are nearing double-digit levels" in the region. Eagle is tar-

geting the individual, club and training markets and will offer the aircraft in three models: the \$105,000 Standard, the \$120,000 Sport and the \$122,000 Training variant.

Eagle forecasts sales of more than 25 150s by the end of this year, with further increases anticipated following night visual flight rules and aerobatic approval in the fourth quarter and instrument flight rules approval next year. □