

## FLEET STRUCTURING

## UNI cancels Q400s as market dives

EVA Airways subsidiary UNI Air has cancelled its order for six firm Bombardier Dash 8 Q400s plus six options as Taiwanese airlines face overcapacity and a slowing domestic economy.

The aircraft were originally scheduled for delivery in early 1999, but UNI Air, which was a Dash 8 Q400 launch customer, deferred them.

"We have cancelled the order, and we have no plans to buy any new aircraft," says Cherry Chen, UNI's fleet planning manager. "The domestic market is just not prosperous."

Meanwhile, Taiwan's biggest and most profitable domestic carrier, Far Eastern Air Transport (FAT), has wet-leased a Boeing 757-200 to Air Macau, and will consider terminating the leases on up to four of its Boeing MD-80s when the terms expire over the next two years. FAT would prefer to lease out its MD-80s because the 757s are profitable on regional routes.

Taiwan's domestic market has been hurt by rising ticket prices, overcapacity and a slowing economy, which has caused many passengers to switch to trains and buses. "We have never seen a market situation this bad," says FAT.

The slow market was reflected at last week's TATE show where Embraer was the only regional aircraft exhibitor. Embraer is talking to FAT and China Airlines subsidiary Mandarin Airlines.

Mandarin is planning to replace seven Fokker 50s and two Fokker 100s, says Ricardo Pesce, Embraer director of business development, Asia Pacific. Mandarin has shown interest in the ERJ-170.

"We expect to see some recovery in the Taiwan market in the next two years," says Pesce.

## PROCUREMENT ANDREW DOYLE / TAIPEI

## Taiwan's STOVL need could extend Harrier production

A short take-off fighter would allow air superiority even if runways were destroyed

The Taiwanese air force is developing a potential requirement for a short take-off/vertical landing (STOVL) fighter which could allow Boeing to extend AV-8B Harrier production beyond 2004.

Taiwan may consider acquiring 60-100 Harrier II Plus fighters from 2005 if it decides to pursue a requirement for a STOVL fighter capable of achieving air superiority without the need for runways, Boeing officials said at last week's Taipei Aerospace Technology Exhibition (TATE).

US Marine Corps AV-8Bs are being equipped with new fuselages under a remanufacturing programme due to be completed in 2004. The composite wings - designed to last 20,000h - are retained.

If Taiwan buys Harriers, one option would be to continue producing the fuselages beyond 2004

and transfer production tooling for the wing to Taiwan's Aerospace Industrial Development Corporation, says Boeing AV-8 business development manager Jeff Maxwell.

Studies by the Taiwanese military have not progressed beyond the "analysis of alternatives" stage, he says, although "I think they are serious about STOVL".

The US Government supplied Taiwan with AV-8B performance data earlier this year, and the military has been given an "informational briefing" by Boeing. A team of Taiwanese officials was also given access to an AV-8B in the USA as part of a USMC briefing.

In an attempt to reduce costs, Boeing is considering offering Taiwan a version of the AV-8B equipped with an avionics suite based around the Lockheed Martin F-16's Northrop Grumman APG-66

radar rather than the existing Raytheon APG-65, which is also used in US Navy Boeing F/A-18A/B Hornets. Taiwan has a large fleet of F-16s but the country is not an F/A-18 customer.

The Joint Strike Fighter, a variant of which will be capable of STOVL operations, is unlikely to be considered for export to Taiwan before 2020.

■ The first two of nine Boeing CH-47SD Chinook transport helicopters ordered by Taiwan are due to be delivered in November and will be used for training. Boeing anticipates follow-on orders for forward area re-arming and refuelling point (FARP) tanker variants of the CH-47 from Taiwan if the country gains approval to buy modern attack helicopters. The US Government recently turned down Taiwan's request for Boeing AH-64D Apache Longbows.

## FIGHTER DEVELOPMENT BRENT HANNON / TAIPEI

## AIDC seeks \$200m for new indigenous fighter

Taiwan's Aerospace Industrial Development Corporation (AIDC) is looking for \$200 million to develop a new version of the Ching-Kuo Indigenous Defence Fighter (IDF), which will be a safeguard if Chinese pressure on Europe and the US to stop weapons sales to the country succeed.

The IDF C/D programme has an initial \$30 million budget for systems design, which has been completed. AIDC has applied for another \$200 million over seven years to complete development and flight testing of two new airframes as well as the modification and flight testing of two existing A/B airframes.

The new build IDFs will include extra fuel volume to increase range by 20-30%. The tests will determine which version of the IDF will go into production.

"We have tried to modify the existing A/B airframe to enhance

the range," says Jeff Wu, business development manager, AIDC defence system and technology division. "But the airframe was difficult to modify, so we are building the new aircraft." The IDF C/D programme includes a single- and a two-seater.

The next-generation IDF, either the modified A/B or the all-new C/D, will incorporate an advanced version of the GD-53 radar, which

is a derivative of the Lockheed Martin APG-67. The existing Honeywell/AIDC ITEC TFE1042 engine will be retained.

AIDC ceased IDF manufacture in December 1999 after completing 130 aircraft, 28 of which were two-seaters. Initially Taiwan planned to acquire 250 IDFs, but deals for 150 Lockheed Martin F-16s and 60 Dassault Mirage 2000-5s reduced the need for the indigenous fighter.



ROBBIE SHAW

An upgraded IDF will have longer range