

AIRCRAFT DEVELOPMENT JUSTIN WASTNAGE / TUSSENHAUSEN, GERMANY

# Grob to freeze G140 design in June

German aircraft builder plans to incorporate customer feedback before launching flight test programme for four seater

Grob will start taking customer commitments for its four-seat G140TP from June once it freezes the design of the single turboprop corporate aircraft.

Grob, based at Tussenhausen near Munich, says it has incorporated customer feedback since launching the product at last year's Paris air show (*Flight International*, 26 June -2 July 2001). Despite considerable interest, the manufacturer has had to delay development due to the entry into production of the G120 trainer. Grob is wary of diversifying too far from its core market of military trainers, says Hans Doll,

aerospace division sales director, following two aborted high-altitude powered glider projects in the 1990s.

Doll says that although the product has received serious enquiries, the company was reluctant to take any financial commitments until it had completed the design. The aircraft is based on its aerobatic military trainers, but Grob expects half G140TP customers to come from the civil market. The company says several air forces are interested in acquiring the aircraft for mixed aerobatic training and utility roles, but the aircraft will also be mar-

keted to the owner-flown community, which currently "under-utilises" six-seat aircraft, but needs greater speed than a piston. Fuel supply and cost concerns are also driving demand for smaller turboprops, says Doll, who foresees a market of 20-40 a year.

In response to customer input, additional cargo space has been incorporated in the aircraft's all-composite tail for lengthy items, such as golf clubs or skis.

The interior has also been made larger for the rear two seats and the aircraft will be available with a pressurised cabins, only for the VIP

variant. The company is in talks with a US completion centre for VIP interiors.

Grob will start G140 test flights late in the second quarter and expects to impose a design freeze soon after. The company will then start accepting commitments for the \$1 million aircraft. Flight testing will take a year, leading to European JAR-23 certification "possibly" by mid-2003, says Doll.

The Rolls-Royce 250-B17F-powered aircraft has a maximum cruise speed of 215kt (395km/h) and a maximum range of 2,130km (1,150nm).

## PRODUCTION

### Dassault to move manufacture of Falcon components to China

Dassault Aviation has signed a framework agreement with China Aviation Industry 1 (AVIC I) unit Chengdu Aircraft covering the production of fuselage parts for the French manufacturer's Falcon 2000EX business jet.

Dassault hopes that the deal will help it break into China's embryonic business jet market, which is forecast to undergo rapid expansion. "The Falcon 2000EX is today our best-seller in the USA, and we hope one day it will be

the same in the skies of China," says Dassault Aviation chairman and chief executive Charles Edelstenne.

Production of the fuselage parts is due to be transferred from France to China next year, upon completion of staff training.

Some 15 affiliated AVIC I companies already manufacture a range of parts under subcontract for western companies, including Airbus and Boeing. Fairchild Dornier is also in discussion with AVIC II about 728 subcontracting.



## HELICOPTER SERVICES

### CR awarded Hong Kong ticket

CR Airways has received an air operator's certificate (AOC) from Hong Kong's civil aviation department. The approval clears the way for the territory's third commercial helicopter operator to launch non-scheduled passenger services within the Pearl River delta region using a Sikorsky S-76C+. Hong Kong International Airport-based CR is the first helicopter operator to receive an AOC since Hong Kong became a special administrative region of China.

## REGULATIONS

### ASTM leads on light-sport category standards

Standards for the new US category of light-sport aircraft are to be drawn up under the auspices of the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM). Industry will be responsible for agreeing and applying consensus standards for the design and production of the light two-seat aircraft under the US Federal Aviation Administration's so-called sport pilot notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM), released last month.

The basic standards could be in

place by the time the final sport pilot rule takes effect, expected by the middle of next year, says Earl Lawrence, Experimental Aircraft Association vice-president of government and industry relations. Certification is expected to take three to six months. SkyStar Aircraft has already announced plans for a Kitfox Sport, based on its Series 7 kitplane, to be certificated and available by December next year. The aircraft is expected to sell for less than \$60,000.

Manufacturers of light-sport aircraft will not have to obtain costly FAA type certification, but will have to guarantee that the design and production quality-control system meet industry consensus standards, says Lawrence. This will mean higher costs for manufacturers used to building kitplanes and ultralights, but will provide access to a new market for recreational aircraft, says Lawrence.

Although the ASTM will draw up specific US light-sport aircraft

design and production standards, products which already meet Canadian, European or UK standards for very-light aircraft are expected to comply. US companies are concerned this could give foreign manufacturers an early advantage in the market.

**Clarification** In our 5 March issue, we described the UK's new National Private Pilot's Licence as applying to all single-engine piston fixed-wing aircraft with fewer than four seats. This should have read four seats or fewer.