SUPERSONIC PLEA

The US Federal Aviation Administration is being urged to change rules prohibiting supersonic flight over land. The General Aviation Manufacturers Association says the rules hinder development of supersonic aircraft and that technology has advanced since the ban was imposed.

HAWKER SELECTION

Raytheon is offering AirCell’s Iridium-based satellite communications system as a factory option on the Hawker 400XP and 800XP and has selected the equipment for its Flight Options fractional-ownership fleet.

GIV DELIVERY

Gulfstream has delivered a GIV to Air China Business, a new subsidiary of CNAC offering VIP charters in China.

AVIONICS

Grob selects Apex for G160

Grob has picked Honeywell’s Apex integrated cockpit for its G160 Ranger single-turboprop business aircraft. The German manufacturer is the first announced customer for Apex, but Honeywell says the system has been picked for two other aircraft programs yet to be revealed. First flight of the carbonfibre-composite seven-seater is imminent.

CIVIL AERO

The standard Apex system in the G160 features three 265mm (10.4in)-diagonal liquid-crystal displays, engine indicating and crew alerting system, communications/navigation radios, digital autopilot and enhanced ground-proximity warning system. Options include weather radar, traffic collision avoidance system, radio altimeter and Honeywell’s flight information system datalink.

Initial deliveries of the G160, beginning in 2005, will be with Honeywell’s EFS-40 electronic flight-instrument system, with Apex being installed as standard from 2006. The pressurised G160 is powered by an 850shp (635kW) Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A-42A, giving a 270kt (500km/h) cruise speed.

AIRBUS A320

The first certifiable A320 flight-test aircraft has been flown for the first time. The A320’s development is expected to be completed by the end of 2004, with entry into service scheduled for 2005.

ECLIPSE RETIRES TEST AIRCRAFT AND READIES ASSEMBLY LINE

Eclipse Aviation has “retired” its first test aircraft after accumulating 54 flight hours on 55 sorties powered by interim Teledyne Continental turbojets. Albuquerque, New Mexico-based Eclipse is preparing for the start of assembly of the first conforming production versions of its personal jet with the chosen Pratt & Whitney Canada PW610F turbofan.

Eclipse says tests using the original Eclipse 500 prototype confirmed the basic aircraft “requires no significant redesigns and remains on track for certification in 2006”. The first conforming test aircraft is due to fly in late 2004, pending the successful test and development of the PW610F – a scaled-down version of the PW615 under test for Cessna’s Citation Mustang. Seven aircraft will be involved in certification.

Although outwardly virtually identical to the later aircraft, the late engine change from the original Williams FJ22 to the heavier PW610F limited the first prototype to testing basic aerodynamics and handling. “The outer mould line hasn’t changed, but practically everything else has been touched,” says Eclipse president Vern Babun. “We are starting the early fabrication of some of the aircraft parts, and we will be loading tools in March to build the first aircraft. We are firming up the redesigns and changes that are required to move from the Williams to the P&W engine.” These are mainly associated with the structural changes to accommodate the extra 410kg (900lb) airframe, engines and fuel weight and includes thicker wing spars and ribs.

CERTIFICATION

Sino Swearingen SJ30-2 on course for approval

Sino Swearingen Aircraft’s second conforming SJ30-2 prototype, number 0004, has joined the US Federal Aviation Administration certification programme in San Antonio, Texas. The company says a third conforming aircraft will join the effort in “a few months”, adding: “With these three aircraft, certification of the SJ30-2 will be completed on a schedule to be announced soon.” The seven-seat, light-jet certification effort has been accelerated to make up for the delay caused by the 26 April crash of the first prototype.

COMMUNICATIONS

Tenzing to modify Inmarsat service

Airbone internet service provider Tenzing Communications is to modify its Inmarsat Swift64-based satellite communications service in an effort to break into the business aviation market.

Airbus-backed Tenzing, which successfully completed full-scale tests of its email offerings using the Swift64 high-speed satellite connection in February, says only minor changes to the system’s graphical user interface were required before launch. Tenzing is marketing the system as a cheaper, lightweight option to recently launched competing broadband services.

John Wade, executive vice-president for strategic planning at Tenzing, says the company received enquiries from several corporate aircraft owners now using expensive, low-speed links. The company is targeting smaller business aircraft, as antennas needed for other high-speed services cannot be accommodated on smaller jets, he adds.

Tenzing has teamed with AirCell to provide a wireless local area network on board private business jets. The system uses a commercially available portable server and standard laptop computers, since under Part 91 rules, the use of wireless devices is at the pilot’s discretion. If successful, supplemental type certificates for business jet types will be sought to allow for use in fractional and charter jets.

Tenzing is flying demonstrations with a Cessna Citation CJ1.