

Aerospace ethics code tops Douglass list for Farnborough



Charles Williams

Aerospace Industries Association chief executive John Douglass plans to use Farnborough to firm up two joint operations between European and US aerospace. The first, to be announced at the airshow, is the establishment of an international ethics code for aerospace companies.

"This has been led by the US," Douglass says, "but we've been very pleased by the way the SBAC has come on board, as well as others like the Brazilians, Canadians and Japanese."

"This is not a reaction to bad things going on in the industry – when you look at aerospace trade, it has become a major global business. When you have a trade programme involving hundreds of billions of dollars, it makes sense to have an ethical framework that is recognised by all parties."

A single body will be established to develop the code to the satisfaction of all the international partners, creating a set of rules and procedures to facilitate smooth international business.

Douglass says: "We will look at how

we handle things such as if one of our employees points out a law has been broken. How do we respond? What is our common industry position if international law is broken? Who do we report instances of bribery to?"

Expected

The other piece of international co-operation expected to be under discussion at Farnborough is work between the US and Europe on harmonising air traffic control systems.

"The long-term projects relating to this – SESAME in Europe and NGATS in the US – are both off to a good start. Both here and in Europe, government has made a commitment to modernise air traffic control and harmonise with each other. In general, co-operation has so far been good on both sides."

He says the only cloud on the horizon for relations between the US and Europe is the ongoing subsidies dispute in the World Trade Organisation. "That's more between our governments now, rather than industry. We want to see the US position prevail, and we're confident it will."

On the back of a record year for US

aerospace in terms of orders, Douglass says these are "good times" for the US market.

"There are a lot of exciting things happening," he says. "The US space programme is moving forward again, for example, and we are seeing use of UAVs increasing every year."

"We grew by \$14 billion in 2005 and expect to grow again by \$14 billion-\$15 billion in 2006. We see continual sales growth in the US industry to the end of the decade. It can be easily \$250 billion by 2010. That's a conservative projection."

However, the success of the US industry does not mean the American industry has been crowing over Airbus's recent travails.

"The main US view is that all companies have difficulties when products are being developed," says Douglass. "Airbus is a good company – many of our US companies sell to them and we want to see their products prosper. We're not gloating that Boeing has got back ahead. Modern high-tech aerospace programmes are hard to develop. We don't see this as an earth-shaking change."

Success flies on the CRJ900

FOCUS ON MANUFACTURING



GROWTH INDUSTRY

William Hynett with vision for the UK's aircraft manufacturer B-N Group.

The UK's only remaining commercial aircraft manufacturer is busier than ever. Alan Peaford meets a business that is set to grow.

Britain has played a major part in aircraft manufacturing over the past century – but today the mantle of responsibility for upholding that reputation rests on the shoulders of one small company located on a small island off the English mainland.

But that company – headed by an ambitious and focused former Royal Navy jet pilot, backed by Omani capital and delivered by a workforce with genuine old-fashioned values – is growing and flying the flag for the UK aerospace industry.

The company is the B-N Group, owner of Britten-Norman. It is the UK's only commercial aeroplane manufacturer with a business that continues to defy the odds by growing from its Bembridge airfield base on the east coast of the Isle of Wight, about 50 miles (90km) south of Farnborough.

That corner of the beautiful green island is known by locals as 'God's waiting room' since so many people choose the area for their retirement. Now there is a new vitality about the place as former Sea Harrier pilot William Hynett steadily rebuilds a brand. Ravaged by past failures, it is now firmly set on a course for success.

"We are a small company," says Hynett, "and probably the smallest manufacturer bringing an aircraft to Farnborough. But we want people to know we are here."

"We want people to know we are new team but with a well-established product that has shaken off the problems of the past and with a lot of

new options." When Hynett was brought in to Britten-Norman four years ago by the Zawawi brothers, the company was beginning a painful growth with 21 employees salvaged from the collapse of Britten-Norman Ltd.

"We now have more than 160 full-time employees plus a number of contractors based at the Bembridge site," says Hynett.

The B-N Group incorporates a range of services, from the manufacture of the world-famous Islander aircraft through to Fly BN, the MRO provider and now aero composite business.

The company is also re-assembling the world's best-selling GA aircraft, the Cirrus SR20 and SR22 models. BN Resources is developing type rating for the BN2T Islander and planning further growth in training.

Says Hynett: "We had a good look at what we were doing. A key was getting the right managing directors to run the business."

"Our drawings were all being done by hand and the only computers were 286 model PCs. We have modernised our systems and changed the approach." The core of the Britten-Norman business is

the Islander. More than 800 of the type are flying in 120 countries. "The majority are 30 years old but they are rugged aircraft and keep on going."

B-N Group has also become involved in spares. "That was something we had outsourced. But we realised we were losing touch with our customers," says Hynett.

"We now have businesses in Australia and the USA specifically to work with our customers in those areas."

The company is also offering an ambitious buy-back programme for Islanders and its three-engined Trislanders. "We can put new wings and engines on a zero-houred airframe

and produce an aircraft that it is hard to not make money with."

Hynett is keen to produce a refitted Trislander as well as continued development on a BN2C, an upgraded version of the successful BN2B, but the company has been too busy.

A contract to provide the British government with four Defender 4000s, alongside the commitment to reassemble more than 100 Cirrus aircraft in a year has fully occupied the business.

"We are ready to go with these projects but we need orders first," says Hynett. "We will get on with producing demonstration

aircraft but as we get busier that gets put back."

The fourth Defender 4000 is currently in production at Bembridge. The aircraft capitalises on the 40 years of Islander heritage with its low-speed handling characteristics, extended endurance and increased payload.

At Farnborough, BN is showing a BN2T Islander reconfigured for surveillance work. The aircraft – with G-SELX registration – is being used to demonstrate the success of integrating Selex sensors and airborne systems integrated mission sensor suite (IMSS) onto the platform.

The demonstrator has been repainted for its Farnborough debut and is operating demonstration flights to show just how well the infrared and other surveillance equipment works. Between flights it is on display in the static park.

The BN2T features low loiter speeds, long-range endurance and low signature noise, despite the power of the Rolls-Royce engines, and superior image quality

thanks to the Selex IMSS.

"The slow speed cruise of 60-70kt (110-125km/h) compares favourably with a helicopter at a fraction of the price," says Hynett.

Greater Manchester Police are using the aircraft alongside helicopters. "It's an ideal solution. Helicopters can be there for fast response and low-level flights for crowd control, but when it comes to a mission where surveillance counts, then the Islander is ideal."

Working as a systems integrator, BN has offered its aircraft as a test bed for surveillance equipment. "We test different equipment that will be used on all aircraft types. It is an ideal platform."

Hywell says the company is also getting greater demand for a business aviation version of the aircraft. "This is ideal for people who want to fly the routes a helicopter would but who don't want a helicopter," Hywell says. "It costs far less than a helicopter but can put down in tight fields."

Hywell demonstrated these capabilities on a recent private flight. "I was with my brother-in-law on a flight to Sywell [in England's Midlands]. The runway was barely 500m with a cross-wind. ATC couldn't believe we wanted to take off on the short runway. We were airborne with more than half of the runway remaining. This airplane is remarkable for its performance."

Hywell has opened the doors to Bembridge. "I love the way that the USA embraces GA," he says. "I want this to be a little bit of the USA."



The Britten Norman Islander BN2T is at Farnborough fitted out for Selex. It is pictured here before leaving from Bembridge.