Jumbo Guppy takes shape

The first flight of the 'Guppy' style 747-400 Large Cargo Freighter, which will be used to transport large structural parts of the 787 Dreamliner around the globe, could happen as soon as next month, says Mike Bair, vice-president of the 787 programme..

Speaking at the show this week, Bair said that three 747s are being modified at Evergreen Aviation Technologies based in Taiwan's capital Taipei.

AA tops for 757 winglets

American Airlines (AA) has ordered 104 Aviation Partners' Boeing (APB) blended winglets shipsets for its Boeing 757-200 fleet.

This order will give AA the world's largest fleet of 757-200s fitted with the APB winglets.

Installation will be carried out by AA engineers in Tulsa, Oklahoma, alongside the installation of the carrier's 737-800 winglets.

Lonel-Dan Vulcan- MD/CEO RAI and Pierluigi Parolin- Alenia.

Partners sign up to join 787 programme

Boeing has selected SR Technics as it first maintenance partner for its GoldCare support programme for the 787, with Smiths Aerospace and Hamilton Sundstrand becoming the first system supply partners.

Bob Avery, Boeing's vice president 787 services and support, says the manufacturer expects to sign up its first customers for GoldCare later this year. GoldCare is a one-stop-shop that sees Boeing take responsibility for maintenance repair and overhaul (MRO) and the associated support services on a per-flight hour basis.

"Three customers stepped forward right away. They are all very different in terms of operations, which shows there might be very wide appeal," Avery says. Airlines would need to sign up 12-18 months before delivery, with the first deliveries slated for mid-2008. "We are coming into the timeframe where airlines need to make a decision."

He says Boeing is looking for between three and five maintenance partners and expects supplier partner numbers to eventually be in the mid-20s.

Putting the brakes on electronic development

Goodrich's electronic braking system will deliver key benefits to Boeing's 787 customers, not least of which is cost, says Jack Carmola, Goodrich's president, Airframe Systems.

"Brakes are in the top five of cost component maintenance for aircrafts," says Carmola. "With today's electric brake system and carbon technology, we think we can save the customer 15-20% in terms of landings-per-brake-overhaul.

"And if you think about the highest causes of dispatch reliability problems, it is hydraulics leaks. With this system you take an entire hydraulic system off the airplane. We also think that with a twin-aisle airplane we can save 200lb (90kg) in weight – not insignificant."

Much of these savings are also delivered by integrating the brake control with the electric brakes to maximise brake life. "We can take it one step further. When we get into larger fleets and understand how customers use their aircraft, we can tune the software to even get greater improvements in break life and performance.

"You just can't get that in hydraulic systems."

But what is unique to this form of system, he adds, is that like the 787 itself, it is designed to be modular and built in component elements.

"Before customers even get to scheduled, predictive or reactive maintenance, it offers the airline better dispatchability. If there is a problem, the component can be switched out on the aircraft. A whole system doesn't have to be taken out. This makes a really compelling argument."

The electric braking system comprises the aircraft wheels, electro-mechanically actuated carbon brakes and electronic enclosures that drive the digitally-controlled brakes. The system provides precision control of the brakes while at the same time achieving strict weight performance requirements set for Boeing's forthcoming long-haul aircraft.

"We're currently in the testing phase and developing the full integration between software and hardware," says Carmola.

Jack Carmola: Savings.

Door trainer passes the Singapore test

A door trainer for the new Airbus A380 has successfully passed its final factory acceptance test. The unit was designed and developed for Singapore Airlines, the launch customer for the aircraft, by the UK-based training simulator manufacturer EDM (Hall1, D9).

EDM, which secured the order in April, 2005, said the door trainer was designed to "exacting levels of fidelity and robustness" and has all the features to enable the airline to carry out rigorous safety and emergency procedures.

The airline, which is due to take delivery of the first aircraft by the end of the year, specified that the door perform in both normal mode but in a range of different operational scenarios.

To that end, EDM's in-house team created a product that replicates the load-bearing properties and mechanical behaviour of a door which has faults ranging from mechanical damage or is obstructed to software failure.

"The A380 door trainer provided an excellent challenge for the team at EDM," says project manager Howard Gregory. "We worked from original Airbus data to produce the door from first principles, but because this is the first trainer of its type for a brand new aircraft, there were no examples or benchmarks to act as a reference."

The factory acceptance test was carried out by a team from Singapore Airlines.

Romaero wins workshare of revitalised ATR programme

Romanian company Romaero will begin production of fuselage sections for the ATR 42/72 under a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) signed with Alenia Aeronautica at the show yesterday.

Under the initial agreement, Romaero will manufacture section 13 of the ATR 42/72 fuselage and complete relevant engineering activities. Alenia says the industrial co-operation project could be extended to other military and civil programmes if successful.

Production is expected to start within six to 12 months, creating 200 new jobs based at Romaero's headquarters in Bucharest. Pierluigi Parolin, Alenia 's head of industrial compensation, says: "This is the first step. Yes, there will be other steps – one candidate is the C27-J."

Establishing a presence on the ATR 42/72 programme, which now has 100 customers in 65 countries, is an important breakthrough for Romaero, which has already established working relationships with other parts of Finmeccanica, having signed an agreement with AgustaWestland to assemble the A109 Power tailboom.

Bombardier may revive CSeries

Bombardier expects to take a decision by the end of the year on whether to resurrect the CSeries or develop a stretched version of the CRJ900.

Much will depend on whether the Canadian manufacturer can find a launch customer for the CSeries, says Michael McAdoo, vice-president strategy and business development.