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FLIGHT

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BLAIRBUS



The RAF's Red Arrows display team had special escort duty yesterday when they flew in to accompany the Airbus A380 for its display at Farnborough.

On the ground, the spectacular show was

watched by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair who later had a 15min tour of the superjumbo.

Blair is reportedly considering the Airbus corporate jetliner ACJ for British government VIP duties (see I Want That One, page 32).

Speaking after the display the PM said, "The flypast was absolutely stunning, the most spectacular thing I have ever seen."

"The Farnborough show is a magnificent showcase for British aerospace industry."

LITENING STRIKES FOR TYPHOON

Jon Lake

The Eurofighter programme took a major step forward yesterday with agreement to integrate the Litening 3 laser designator pod and Enhanced Paveway II dual mode GPS/laser-guided bomb on RAF Typhoons.

The contract was signed between Eurofighter GmbH and the NATO Eurofighter and Tornado Management Agency.

This takes the programme to a new level of operational capability, and opens the way for the RAF to gain a much-needed boost in capability.

With its 13 hardpoints, Typhoon can simultaneously carry four medium-range and two short-range air-to-air missiles, up to

six laser-guided bombs and external fuel tanks, all without compromising the aircraft's performance characteristics.

Peter Worrall, NETMA general manager, says the air forces "are seeing the capability of their aircraft being consistently enhanced in line with the requirements of the development programme." The contract is "great news for all Eurofighter stakeholders".

Significant

The contract is significant. A Eurofighter insider pointed out that "Industry had been pressing ahead with development and engineering work 'at risk' and using some advance funding, but this will facilitate more rapid progress."

He described the contract as being "far more significant than it first appears. It's

much more than just signing the UK austere air-to-ground contract because it represents us getting all of the dominoes in a line, with four-nation agreement on a range of engineering and programme issues.

"Austere is just the first domino, and we can now look forward to making very rapid progress in all sorts of other areas."

Eurofighter CEO Aloysius Rauhen described Farnborough 2006 as the most exciting and significant promotional event so far for the Typhoon.

"This week we have seen the world's best-selling fighter aircraft display in both air-to-air and air-to-ground configurations.

"This morning's contract announcement rounds off a fantastic week for everyone involved in the programme. No-one can dispute that Typhoon delivers."



Champagne moment: Peter Worrall, Netma General Manager and Aloysius Rauhen, CEO of Eurofighter.

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HEADLINES

GP7200 on new A350 has hurdles to clear

Mike Martin

Fresh from victory in placing its GP7200 engine on the UPS Airbus A380 fleet, the GE/Pratt & Whitney Engine Alliance (EA) has had preliminary thoughts about the powerplant for the planned Airbus A350XWB family.

But there are hurdles to overcome, EA president Bruce Hughes said yesterday. They centre on agreement by parent companies GE

and P&W, not to mention technical and regulatory issues, he added.

At present, GE is in discussions with Airbus about putting its GNex engine on the A350XWB.

"GE is looking at that application with Airbus and they will have to finish that process. If both GE and Pratt want us to look at this, we would have to make a business case because we would have to change the engine," said Hughes.

On the technical side, the A350XWB requires an engine in the

thrust range 75,000- 95,000lb (330-420kN). "It would require a bigger core and fan and significant engine changes to actually power the [new] A350," said Hughes.

Finally, the EA is bound by anti-trust measures that currently restrict the GP7200 to four-engine aircraft of 450 seats and above. An A350XWB application would need a change to the rules. "I would never underestimate the EU Competition Committee. It took three years to get approval [for the

original agreement]," he said. P&W recently moved into GE territory when it began manufacturing parts for CFM engines – a joint venture between GE and Snecma of France. But it has had no effect on the Engine Alliance, said Hughes.

"Our parent companies are very competitive. In the Alliance, we are cognisant that we have these two gorillas on the side and they don't get along on a whole range of issues," he said.



SELEX hopes to win major homeland share

Selex Sistemi Integrati expects the worldwide homeland protection market to be worth a massive €200-300 billion (\$250-380 billion) over the next few years and is investing significantly to win a major share.

Homeland protection is the term used to describe the integrated defence of national assets against not only terrorism but also illegal fishing, piracy, illegal immigration and smuggling.

The Finmeccanica subsidiary, which specialises in civil air traffic and vessel traffic management systems and military air defence and command-and-control systems, said here this week that it had spent €15-20 million to date on defining its homeland protection offerings and planned to invest a further €100 million in the medium term.

Large Systems is the label the company has coined for its approach to building homeland protection solutions – creating a network-centric architecture and integrating into it the Finmeccanica group's existing sensor, communications, C4I and security capabilities.

Airshow is moving experience for Lasham

UK aircraft maintenance organisation ATC Lasham, based at Lasham airfield just a few miles from Farnborough, has been on hand to support exhibitors since the first aircraft for the static park flew in.

For the past 10 years, the company, which has facilities at Lasham, London Southend and St Athan in South Wales, has been contracted by SBAC to handle the arrival and departure of every aircraft attending the Farnborough airshow. A 40-strong team, headed by project manager Martin Miller, has been on site for more than a week already.

ATC Lasham supplies and handles all ground support equipment such as ground power units, tugs, access equipment and tow bars. Its task is to receive aircraft for the static display and reposition them daily as required for the flying display and demonstration flights. One of this year's challenges is dealing with the special characteristics of the Airbus A380, which in addition to featuring on the static display, will make daily demo flights. Four aircraft have to be moved to make room for the A380, and there are only two places on the airfield large enough to accommodate the superjumbo.

Big job:
ATC Lasham project manager Martin Miller on one of the tugs required to move the A380.



Torino's ambitions are sky-high

Piemonte, Italy's largest aerospace and aviation manufacturing region with more than 100 companies, is looking to explore new foreign markets at Farnborough (Hall 1, C18).

The Piemonte Chamber of Commerce has brought nine aerospace companies of varying size to promote the industry's strengths and establish strategic alliances.

Gianpiero Maserà, chief executive of the Turin Chamber, says: "It's the only region in Italy with major aviation and aerospace industries in one place. Our companies need access to other SMEs."

The north-western region was the birthplace of Italian aeronautical industry, and Finmeccanica – which was originally based

in Turin – still has a manufacturing base there. Hoping to replicate that success is ITC which consists of five companies supplying a complete system of components and machining operations.

The others vary in size from Teksid Aluminium, Fidia and Massucco which employ up to 340 people with turnovers up to €45 million, to the smallest, REM and Tecnomeccanica, with workforces of 9-25 people.

Diana Giorgini of Piemonte's foreign trade office says: "We would like to invite foreign companies to come to Torino and see what our companies have to offer. We want people to know there's a strong aerospace business in Piemonte that's ready to do business."

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'Sham' claims stall work on LUH helicopter contract



The MD Explorer-based bid.

Paul Derby

The US Army's Light Utility Helicopter (LUH) contract, awarded to EADS North America last month, has been suspended while the General Accounting Office (GAO) studies a formal protest by MD Helicopters which brands the army's pricing analysis as "a total sham".

The 90-day suspension is a legal require-

ment under the procurement process and means that EADS will face increasing production pressures, with eight UH-145 helicopters due to be delivered by the end of 2006. The US Army wants to increase that number to 16 via supplemental funding.

The decision poses a difficult problem for EADS North America because if it does begin work before the GAO reports in October it would be at its own risk.

MDHI filed a scathing protest, obtained by

Flight Daily News, about the way the army conducted the procurement process following a decision to award the 322-aircraft, \$3 billion contract to what it describes as "a foreign conglomerate".

It also challenges EADS North America's standing as a 'low risk' supplier. The protest document alleges that the decision has "far reaching and serious unexamined risk issues".

The protest document also reveals that in May the US Army suggested to MDHI that it

should raise the price of its bid, based on the MD Explorer, because it was potentially unprofitable and might jeopardise the viability of the business. A mechanism has been built into military procurement in the USA to avoid unrealistic contract pricing.

MDHI reserves its most stinging criticism for the pricing analysis element of the bid process, saying: "The army's pricing analysis was arbitrary and capricious at best, a total sham at worst."

Airbus notches up \$2.3bn in final day orders

Airbus closed its Farnborough week in strong style, notching up orders worth a total of \$2.3 billion yesterday, with sales to Wizz Air of Hungary and CIT Group.

The \$1.3 billion order from low-cost airline Wizz Air was for a firm contract for 20 additional A320s. It follows its initial order of 12 A320 aircraft a year ago.

Power

All the aircraft will be powered by International Aero Engines V2500s and be configured in a single-class layout, seating up to 180 passengers. Earlier yesterday, CIT Group signed a firm contract with Airbus for five medium capacity long-range A330-200 wide-bodies, as well as four A320 family aircraft. The deal is worth \$1 billion based on catalogue prices.



I want that one! Blair Force One speculation fuelled

UK Prime Minister Tony Blair flew in to Farnborough yesterday to give his support to European aerospace industry and to voice encouragement for today's international youth day.

Blair spent considerable time visiting the Airbus stand, fuelling suggestions that he could soon become a customer of the manufacturer. When he left the show he flew in an ACJ to Teeside.

Blair has come under political pressure to choose a European replacement for the VIP aircraft of the Royal Air Force's 32 (The Royal) Squadron. The UK government has signalled its intention to acquire a long-range airliner-class business jet and a smaller business jet for European flights.

Since 1944, US presidents - including current US president George Bush - have had their

own aircraft, currently two Boeing 747-200Bs, known when in use as Air Force One, leading some to dub the UK prime minister's proposed aircraft 'Blair Force One'. The Royal Family would also have access to the new aircraft.

During a whistle-stop tour of Farnborough, the prime minister flew into Farnborough's heliport and then watched the spectacular

combined Airbus A380 and Red Arrows fly-by from the SBAC chalet where he met leaders of the major British aerospace companies. He then toured the halls, stopping off at Qinetiq where he met space missions scientist Sima Adhya, who works on the Don Quijote asteroid diversion project. She said: "I told him all about the project and he took a real interest."

Boeing just pipped in show sales battle

Boeing ran Airbus close in the annual airshow sales battle, but Airbus was victorious at Farnborough as the companies announced around 190 orders worth almost \$19 billion.

Airbus's rethink on the A350 hampered its normal show agenda, preventing it from announcing the usual string of major deals, but it still unveiled 114 orders worth more than \$9.7 billion (at catalogue prices).

Boeing announced 72 orders worth \$9.1 billion - the most significant of which was the \$2.8 billion deal with Emirates for 10 747-8Fs. Boeing would have secured a clear victory had its biggest prize - the expected confirmation of Qatar Airways' \$4.9 billion deal for 20 777s - not evaporated when the airline suddenly cancelled the announcement of the already-signed order, due to circumstances not fully explained.



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