

vehicle portfolio, Saab is entering what it calls a strategic agreement with rotary specialist Swiss UAV. Saab will add Swiss UAV's Neo and Koax rotary UAV projects to its larger Skeldar rotary development program as the Swedish company looks to build its product offerings. The Skeldar weighs 200 kg. (91 lb.), while Neo is 75 kg. and Koax 45 kg.

Quiet Progress

Qinetiq saw profits increase 122% to £114 million (\$181.3 million) on a 18% growth in revenue. The company also is looking to increase operating margin by reducing overlap in its home U.K. market by shedding 400 jobs, reducing annual costs by £14 million after a charge of £40 million. Qinetiq also continues to look at strengthening its U.S. operations, which now account for 47% of revenue.

Sued and Unsued

BMI majority shareholder Sir Michael Bishop has launched legal action to force Lufthansa to complete the takeover of the British airline. Lufthansa Chief Financial Officer Stefan Gemkow said last week that BMI is not in the financial shape it should be, giving the German carrier the option to walk away from the deal. Lufthansa wants Bishop to put another \$140 million into the airline. Last October, he exercised

a contractual clause forcing Lufthansa to buy his stake of 50% plus one share in BMI.

Inmarsat Taps Arianespace

Inmarsat has picked European launch provider Arianespace to orbit its Alphasat I-XL communications satellite in 2012, using an Ariane 5 ECA from Arianespace's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. Astrium will build the 6-metric-ton satellite based on its Alphabus platform. Alphasat I-XL will join Inmarsat's 11 geostationary spacecraft offering mobile voice and data services across Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

MIDDLE EAST

Profit Plummetts

Emirates suffered an 80.4% drop in margin in the past year, but the airline still managed to generate \$268 million in profit as fuel costs increased to represent 36.2% of operating costs. Emirates Group Chief Executive Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum notes that for the current year, Middle East-related traffic is forecast to grow 1.2%, falling short of the 3.8% increase in capacity planned by airlines. Emirates says it will take delivery of 18 new aircraft this year.

ASIA-PACIFIC

101 Die in C-130 Crash

A string of Indonesian military aircraft accidents has culminated in the deaths of at least 101 people in a Lockheed C-130H crash in East Java. The plane crashed on approach to the Iswahyudi AFB, having flown from Jakarta. The 112 passengers were military personnel and their families. Among the dead were an air marshal (one of the top officers of the air force) and two people on the ground. Survivors heard at least two explosions and felt the 1980s-built aircraft swaying just before the crash, according to the Associated Press. Another Indonesian C-130 overran its runway on May 10. Twenty-four military personnel were killed when a Fokker F27 hit a hangar last month. In 1991 the crash of another Indonesian C-130H killed more than 130 people.

Hainan Builds Up in Tianjin

Hainan Airlines' owner is strengthening its position in the major port city of Tianjin while separately moving into the Indonesian domestic market. Grand China Express, the group's Tianjin-based short-haul unit, will be renamed Tianjin Airlines as part of a deal under which the city government will become the major shareholder.

TESTING SET FOR ALL-COMPOSITE AMPHIBIAN

Testing of a covertly developed all-composite, twin-engine amphibian is getting underway from Seattle's Lake Washington, with the aim of securing FAA clearance for a flight to the 2009 Experimental Aircraft Assn. convention in Oshkosh, Wis., in mid-summer.

Designed by Ellison-Mahon Aircraft, the six-seat Gweduck is aimed at the kit-plane market. It made its first official flight on Apr. 2. Powered by twin 300-hp. Lycoming IO-540s with handed three-blade MT propellers, the 32.5-ft.-long aircraft has a wingspan of 48 ft. with tip floats deployed, and 50.5 ft. with them stowed. The Gweduck has a wing area of 295 sq. ft. and is 15% larger overall than the similarly configured World War II-vintage Grumman G-44 Widgeon, but "doesn't have any

of the maintenance or piloting headaches," says designer Ben Ellison.

The aircraft is constructed from vinyl ester resin-impregnated fiberglass and foam cores, using the same methods employed by boat builders



ELLISON-MAHON AIRCRAFT

and composite aircraft kit makers such as Glasair. The step-, or hull-mounted break, which allows the aircraft to "unstuck" from the water surface on takeoff, is double the size of the Widgeon's and was evaluated along with other design features during tests on a 25% scale model in Arizona. The aircraft is also fitted with a ballast system that enables the pilot to pump

up to 150 lb. of water into one wing, so one float can be stowed for docking.

Design improvements are underway for the production version, which will have a gross weight of 6,000 lb. and useful load of 2,000 lb.

JOIN FORCES



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