

# Agusta/ Westland confirm A.129 link

Agusta's and Westland's intention to team up in a joint A.129 Mangusta project was confirmed at the Paris Air Show.

At a joint press conference Agusta chairman Raffaello Teti and Westland chairman Sir Basil Blackwell announced the start of a feasibility and predefinition study of a version of the A.129 which could be used by both the Italian and the British Armies. The programme, which has the backing of both the Italian and British Governments, follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) by the two companies about a month ago, to seek closer co-operation in the helicopter field.

Sir Basil, whose company was put up for sale last week following a takeover bid by Alan Bristow, declined to talk about Westland's problems except to say that Bristow was saying that he held 16 per cent of Westland shares, while Westland claims that Bristow holds only 3 per cent.

Sir Basil also insists that there would still be room for Westland's Lynx 3 attack-helicopter programme. He pointed out that the Lynx 3 has side-by-side seating and could carry nine or ten troops, while the A.129 was a tandem two-seater aircraft. "There is no total overlap between the two," he said. Sir Basil added that the Lynx 3 was demonstrated to an unnamed potential customer the day before the press conference.

Teti said that if the four European helicopter companies—Westland, Agusta, MBB, and Aérospatiale—could work together, especially in the Nato arms field, they could represent a major challenge to the helicopter industry of the United States.

"We should at least be dealing on an equal footing with the Americans. Some people think this is just dreaming, but I think that if we persevere we can achieve



*This Agusta proposal for a light-transport variant of the A.129 would carry eight troops and fuel for 2.5hr. Mission gross weight would be 4,300kg, and maximum speed would be 151kt. The A.129LTH would hover out of ground effect at 3,950ft in ISA+15°C. Agusta also proposes a naval A.129 called Gannet. Modifications include a radar nose and night-vision system. Gannet mission gross weight would be 4,000kg, and the tandem two-seater would cruise at 120kt for 3hr*

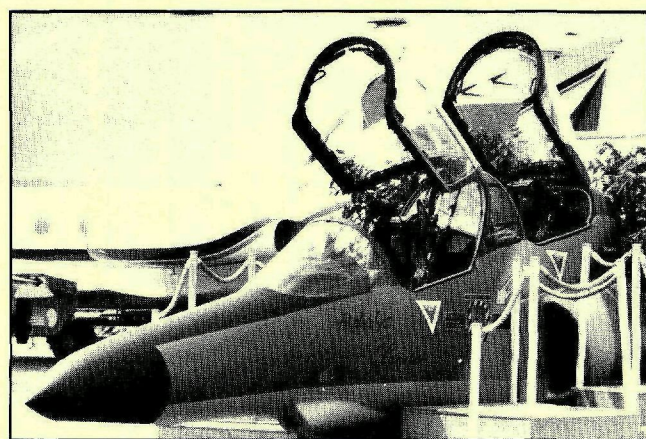
results," said Teti.

The A.129 programme will not be exclusive to the Italian and British firms, although they will be the major contractors. Sir Basil said that getting four countries together from the start was a complex business; two could just about manage it without injury to either.

Deliveries of the A.129 to the Italian Army are expected to begin at the end of 1986. Four prototypes have completed flight-testing and the

fifth is undergoing ground tests. Teti said that representatives from Agusta had recently been to Abu Dhabi to discuss possible sales of the aircraft. He said that a lot of interest had been shown in the A.129 and altogether there were "four or five" nations which had expressed "serious interest".

"The A.129 is a very complex machine, but there are some people who will buy it for a status symbol even if they cannot fly it," he said.



## Dassault shows strike Alpha Jet

Dassault's Alpha Jet Lancier front fuselage mockup shows a longer nose to accommodate an air-to-air, air-to-ground radar, plus forward-looking infrared blister, and a wide-angle HUD behind a new one-piece windscreen.

# Liat launches ATP

Caribbean-based Liat, a loyal customer of British Aerospace, has now placed the first orders for the new 64-seater BAe ATP Advanced Turbo-prop regional airliner. The contract, for two of the type with options on a further two, was signed at Le Bourget by Liat's chairman, Russell Kellman, and BAe chief Sir Raymond Lygo. The total order, including options and spares, is worth £35 million.

Liat will have received the last in an order of four new BAe Super 748s by the end of next month, but these will be traded-in for the ATPs as they are delivered in 1987-88. Indications are that traffic growth, currently running at 12 per cent a year, will continue, thus fully using the 64-seat capacity of the larger aircraft.

The carrier is retaining two of its older 748s until the end of this year, when the first two of an order for five de Havilland Canada Dash 8s arrive. All five will be operating by June 1986. Liat is disposing of its remaining Islanders, though it will retain a few DHC Twin Otters.

Operations manager Capt Arthur Foster says that the airline's advertising slogan will be "The newest fleet in the Western Hemisphere".

Liat has not been profitable for some time, but prospects look better. It intends to pay for the ATPs, apart from exchanging the 748s, by what Sir Raymond Lygo refers to as "a hire-purchase arrangement"—payment out of operating revenues. The airline will be pressing, as it did successfully (with BAe's help) over the new 748s, for whatever British Government financial assistance it can obtain. As Sir Raymond says: "The Treasury has to be convinced. There is no problem with the Foreign Office or the Trade Department".

He believes that BAe has reason to congratulate itself for achieving a launch sale which, in this kind of market, has been made an unusually long time in advance of the first flight.