

Finmeccanica at the Paris Air Show in Le Bourget

Finmeccanica is one of the biggest exhibitors at the 46th Paris International Air Show. This event, a major showcase for the aeronautics, space and defence industries, is the ideal opportunity for manufacturers to show both their sector peers and the public their highly ambitious products and programmes, as well as the state-of-the-art-technologies that are the result of huge investment in research and development. The areas that are sure to attract special interest at the show are nanotechnologies, electro-optics, radar systems, the use of composite materials in complex structures and unmanned aerial vehicles.

The show will see the public debut of the world's largest passenger plane, the A380—which Alenia Aeronautica played an important role in developing—while Finmeccanica is to bring the Aermacchi M346 before an international audience for the first time. The Aermacchi M346 represents a new generation of high-tech training aircraft, and is a worthy heir to the long industrial tradition that has made the company a world leader in this sector. This aircraft is expected to be a leading contender for contracts to supply the military sector with new training aircraft. Aermacchi will also present a technology demonstrator for the new M311, a basic training vehicle developed to compete with modern turboprop training aircraft that offers—at a comparable cost—the advantages of jet propulsion and excellent training features that will help prepare the crews of the new generation of advanced combat aircraft, which will also be on show at Le Bourget.

These include the Eurofighter Typhoon, a European fighter plane for which Finmeccanica makes 20% of the cell, and—following an agreement in defence electronics with BAE Systems that has led to the creation of an avionics joint venture with the UK firm—over 60% of the avionics.

Also in aeronautics, Finmeccanica will be exhibiting the C-27J, a tactical transport aircraft produced by Alenia Aeronautica and Lockheed Martin, and bought by Italy, Greece and Bulgaria. This aircraft is also in the running for contracts in the US, Canada, Asia and other European countries. The C-27J is the only tactical transport aircraft specifically designed for the purpose that is available worldwide, and also offers better performance than its competitors in terms of useful load, speed, range and take-off and landing features.

At Le Bourget, Finmeccanica is also presenting the ATR42MP, a maritime patrol version of the well-known twin-engine regional transport aircraft developed by Alenia Aeronautica. The commercial transport version of this aircraft enjoyed considerable success on international markets in 2004 and the first few months of 2005.

The maritime patrol version, which has a Selex Sensors & Airborne Systems mission system, is set to be an important part of Finmeccanica's offer of integrated solutions for border control and national security to institutional clients all over the world.

At this year's Paris show, a Boeing 767 Tanker model will be seen for the first time. This aircraft, which has been ordered by the Italian air force, was produced in conjunction with Aeronavali, a subsidiary of Alenia Aeronautica. Aeronavali is responsible for making kits to convert passenger models into air-to-air refuelling aircraft. At the company's Naples-Capodichino production facility, the second of the four aircraft ordered by the Italian air force is in the process of being converted, and a decision is awaited from the US on the launch of the programme to replace a large fleet of air-to-air refuelling aircraft currently in service, for which the B767 Tanker is one of the leading candidates.

A key theme at of this year's air show will be unmanned aircraft, a sector in which all the main manufacturers are investing large amounts to produce technology demonstrators. The market for these aircraft, known as UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) is forecast to be worth around EUR 30 billion to 2013, of which around half will be spent on surveillance and reconnaissance systems. Finmeccanica is present on this market with two programmes, both of which will be presented at Le Bourget. These are the Falco, a surveillance UAV, and Sky-X, a technology demonstrator for a multi-role UAV which will provide group companies with useful experience for their participation in the European Neuron UCAV programme.

The helicopter sector is one of Finmeccanica's key markets: the group is worldwide market leader. The "star" helicopter on show at Le Bourget will be the EH101 in its "Americanised" US101 version. The US is acquiring this helicopter for its presidential fleet. Also in evidence will be the new Grand light helicopter (intended for the executive/corporate market); the twin-engine 109; the light single-engine A119; the A129 combat helicopter; and the medium-sized twin-engine AB139, presented for the first time in a medical transport version.

Also exhibiting at the Paris air show will be Finmeccanica's defence electronics business. The subsidiary Selex brings together all Finmeccanica's operations in this area, and the group now ranks second in Europe and sixth worldwide in this sector. Selex generates revenues of more than EUR 3 billion and employs around 19,000 people. The defence electronics business comprises Selex Sistemi Integrati, Selex Communications, Selex Sensors & Airborne Systems and Elsag, and together with Finmeccanica's 100% ownership of AgustaWestland and the creation of the Space Alliance, is one of the cornerstones of the group's strategy of achieving growth, international expansion and consolidation in its main areas of excellence. It is also making a major contribution to Finmeccanica's plan to refocus on its core aerospace and defence business.

The defence systems sector is represented chiefly by the missile joint venture MBDA, in which Finmeccanica has a 25% stake. Just a few weeks ago agreements were signed giving the formal go-ahead for the MEADS programme to develop and build a mobile air defence system that will provide its member countries (Italy, Germany and the US) with protection from low- and high-flying missiles and aircraft.

With the first signs of a recovery in the commercial business and the official launch of the pre-production phase of the Galileo programme, Finmeccanica is European leader in the space business thanks to its alliance with the French company Alcatel, which will be formalised over the next few weeks.

Among the range of space systems on display will be a Sicral defence telecommunications satellite terminal, providing a live audio and video link from the Finmeccanica stand to Italian troops abroad.