

will move aggressively this year to kick off development of the European Data Relay System, a network of relay satellites that ESA aims to deploy in partnership with a private operator. In February, a final request for proposals for EDRS is to be issued to the three contractors bidding for the project. The winner is to be named in May and a contract signed in November, Dordain says.

RUSSIA

Soyuz Not So Costly

The price the European Union will pay for five Soyuz launches to orbit the first 10 Galileo Full Operating Capability (FOC) satellites—€397 million (\$572 million)—has raised some eyebrows in an industry accustomed to cheap Soyuz launches (*AW&ST* Jan. 11, p. 30). But European Space Agency launcher director Antonio Fabrizi says the price is not much higher than the figure agreed in the December 2005 ESA ministerial resolution that made the Soyuz—which will be begin flying from the European spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana, in mid-year—part of Europe's launcher arsenal. Although Soyuz manufacturer Samara did raise its prices, ESA found this was justified, because the Fregat upper stage to be used for Galileo FOC satellites includes a new dispenser. Moreover, Fabrizi notes, Samara's markup was much less than that for the Russian Rockot, which has doubled in price without a configuration change.

Modernized Fighter Crashes

An Su-27SM performing advanced aerobatic maneuvers at Dzengi air base in the Far Eastern Command crashed on Jan. 14 with a senior pilot on board. The base is home to the GAZ-126 Sukhoi plant and the 23rd Interceptor Aviation Regiment, which flies the Su-27. A search for the wreckage and pilot continued after dark with temperatures expected to reach -42F. The aircraft disappeared off the base radar with no communications from the pilot, Lt. Col. Vladimir Sobolev, a 1,300-flight-hour veteran, say U.S. analysts.

Su-35s Due for Trials

Sukhoi is planning to manufacture four production-standard Su-35 fighter

ISRAEL'S UNMANNED AIRMULE SHOWS HOVER STABILITY

Israel's Urban Aeronautics has completed initial tethered hover tests of its AirMule vertical-takeoff-and-landing unmanned cargo/medevac aircraft. The company says the tests demonstrated the fly-by-wire control system's ability to automatically stabilize the vehicle in roll, pitch and yaw. Control is via vanes on the fore and aft ducted rotors, which are driven by a 730-shp. Turbomeca Arriel 1 turboshaft engine. So far, the AirMule has hovered at a height of about 2 ft., just out of ground effect. The tether wires will be removed for the next series of tests, to demonstrate horizontal and vertical position stabilization. The Israel Defense Forces have expressed interest in the AirMule as an unmanned medevac platform.



URBAN AERONAUTICS

aircraft by year-end to be used for air force acceptance trials. Two prototypes are being test flown. The air force ordered 48 Su-35S fighters last year, with deliveries to be completed by 2015.

PS-90 Upgrade Certificated

Perm-based Aviadvigatel has completed certification of the PS-90A2 engine, the latest major upgrade of the basic PS-90A turbofan used on Tupolev Tu-204/214 and Ilyushin Il-96 airliners. Developed with Pratt & Whitney, the "A2" version features a new high-pressure turbine with single-crystal blades and enhanced engine control system. It also draws on several minor upgrades to the design and manufacturing processes. As a result, the PS-90A2 is expected to halve maintenance time and should yield 35-37% lower life-cycle costs. The powerplant, with its 35,240 lb. thrust, is due to enter service next year.

ASIA-PACIFIC

China Tests Anti-Missile System

China says it has successfully tested an anti-missile system for mid-course intercepts. The trial achieved the predicted results, the government says, stressing that the test was defensive in nature and not directed at any country. It produced no lingering space debris,

says the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Details of the system were not disclosed.

Mitsubishi Looks West

Heath Tecna, a U.S. maker of aircraft interior components, will supply Mitsubishi Aircraft with parts for the Mitsubishi Regional Jet. The company, based in Bellingham, Wash., will make interior linings, galley units, lavatories, emergency escape slides and the waste and water system for the MRJ. Mitsubishi says it has also contracted with EADS unit Eurocopter to supply baggage, service and passenger doors.

Busy in Hong Kong

Not all is gloom in the world of aviation services. ASA Group, which provides security, ground handling and concierge services for VIP business flights at Hong Kong International Airport, says it has had to add additional staff since mid-December to keep up with flights from North America, the Middle East, Europe and the rest of Asia.

Correction:

The article "Boeing's Orders at 40-Year Low" (Jan. 11, p. 36) included an incorrect year for when Boeing's posted its most recent low point in orders. The correct year was 1994, when the company netted 125 net.