Bell Boeing 609 Taking Shape

Since the completion of the Bell Boeing 609 preliminary design review in May 1997, the world's first commercial tiltrotor aircraft has begun taking physical form. Working at Bell Helicopter Textron in Fort Worth, Texas, and Boeing in Philadelphia, the 609 team is moving ahead quickly, executing detailed design and releasing computerized engineering drawings at the prime contractor and sub-contractor levels.

The first parts for the revolutionary aircraft were manufactured in Philadelphia this August. At present, both companies are fabricating major composite layup and bonding and final assembly tools at both locations. In Fort Worth, Bell is building major wing assembly fixtures and preparing to build the first composite wing skins. Boeing is renovating a large production line area for 609 fuselage assembly.

Don Barbour, Bell Boeing 609 Marketing Director said, "We're very pleased with the way the 609 is moving forward. We are designing a great performing aircraft, especially for conditions found here in the Gulf States and the Middle East."

"This is the first chance most people in this region have had to become familiar with the 609 mock-up and it is being very well received," he said.

The 609 systems critical design reviews (CDR) have begun and will culminate in the airplane-level CDR in March. Manufacturing of major components and sub-assemblies will quickly follow the CDR.

Also, all major suppliers have been identified. They include:

- Lear Astronics - Flight Control Computers,
- Dowty - Flight Control Actuators,
- Messier-Dowty - Landing Gear,
- Rockwell Collins - Displays and Avionics (Pro Line 21),
- Toray Composites, Inc. - Composite Materials,
- Pratt Whitney - PT6C-67A Turboshaft Engines,
- Sully Produits Speciaux - Window transparencies,
- BF Goodrich Aerospace - Stand-bye instrument system,
- AMETEK Aerospace Systems - Nacelle interface unit.

The Bell Boeing joint venture consists of Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc., a division of Textron, Inc. and Boeing Rotorcraft of Philadelphia, a unit of The Boeing Company.

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