Civil Tiltrotor Sales Commitments Approaches 50 Aircraft

The extraordinary capabilities of the tiltrotor have sparked enormous enthusiasm for the aircraft from customers around the world. So far the Bell Boeing tiltrotor team reports sales commitments for the first civil tiltrotor, the Bell Boeing 609, to be fast approaching the 50 aircraft benchmark.

Sheikh Sultan Maohammed Bin Al Shaikh Merjren of the UAE was among the first customers for the Bell Boeing 609, along with American business entrepreneur Ross Perot Jr. Other major customers include Canadian Helicopter Corporation, Evergreen Helicopters Inc. (US) Helicopter Services Group (Norway), AeroValls (Andorra) Helitech DTY Limited (Australia), Loyd's Investments (US & Poland) Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance (US) Petroleum Helicopters Inc. (US) and Form Air (Turkey).

Most recently, the Central Texas company, Austin Jet, one of the world's leading brokers of new and used helicopters signed a commitment to purchase a Bell Boeing 609 civil tiltrotor aircraft. Austin Jet has a rich tradition in aviation history. In 1994, company founder and president Ron Bower broke the world speed record circumnavigating the globe in just 23 days in a Bell 206B-3 JetRanger. Two years later he broke his own record when along with Bell test pilot John William, Bower circumnavigated the globe in a Bell 430 intermediate twin engine helicopter in just 17 days.

A 21st Century aircraft that combines the takeoff, hover and landing qualities of a helicopter with the high speed, range and efficiency of a turboprop the Bell Boeing 609, will change aviation's support of a variety of business and civil functions. This versatile tiltrotor aircraft will give greatly improved performance including speeds twice as fast and ranges twice as far, as well as cost efficiencies compared to helicopter costs and improved passenger comfort. Such tiltrotor aircraft will also give fixed wing operators an aircraft that has all the capabilities of a turboprop and not require a runway.

The Bell Boeing 609 will cruise at 275 knots with a maximum un-refueled range of 750 nautical miles, 1,000 nautical miles with auxiliary fuel tanks. Its pressurized cabin will seat from up to nine passengers and a crew of two. Its useful load of 5,500 pounds is nearly a ton more than a comparable helicopter. The 609 is all-weather capable, meaning that it can fly into known moderate icing conditions.

The Bell Boeing 609 offers certain other advantages over other forms of vertical flight transportation currently used. Helicopters have reached their physical performance limits while tiltrotors offer unique flexibility, increased productivity, lower operating costs (versus helicopters) and can replace mixed fleets of helicopters and fixed wing aircraft.

Bell and Boeing extensively surveyed current helicopter operators and potential customers to determine exact needs for such an aircraft and its specifications. On the basis of these surveys, the developers found broad market appeal for the size, range and speed of the 609.

Completion of the first four aircraft prototypes will take place in 1998 with first flight in 1999, certification by the Federal Aviation Administration and first customer delivery in 2001.

Bell and Boeing are the world's leaders in tiltrotor technology development and currently produce the military V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft.

The Bell Boeing 609 joint venture consists of Bell Helicopter Textron Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Textron Inc., and Boeing Rotorcraft of Philadelphia, a unit of The Boeing Company.

###

For further information:
Nick Kernstock
Manager, Tiltrotor Communications
(610) 591-2822
Bob Leder
Manager, Communications Operations
Bell Helicopter Textron Inc.
(817) 280-6440