

LONDON – Air line gossip suggests Singapore Airlines is the first carrier to put up its hand for “a specific proposal” on Boeing’s new 7E7. Others are also talking up becoming launch customers, but so far none has made a move.

All Nippon Airways, Lufthansa, Emirates and some Chinese carriers may be in the launch club.

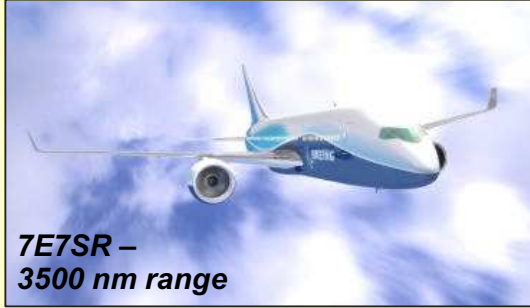
Boeing has board approval only to offer the 7E7. But it is stepping up the pressure to get commitments. Mike Bair, who is running the project, told aviation writers last week: “Our goal is to get the airplane launched in 2004. We sense is that it’s going to be sooner rather than later in 2004.”

Which points to in-house pressure for Farnborough in July.

Singapore Airlines is sued RFPs to both Boeing and Airbus last month for medium-, long-haul and regional. Boeing says the first 7E7 will be ultra longrange – up to 8500 nautical miles (15,500km) – but a regional, 3500nm (6300km) version will follow.

Unlike previous new types, where Boeing looked for at least 50

7E7: Boeing steps up launch pressure



7E7SR – 3500 nm range

7E7’s efficiency enabled the 700nm range increase or extra cargo capacity of six tonnes, which means an all-up weight of 480,000 pounds (218t).

The choice of engine is exciting

sales from three or four customers, CEO Harry Stonecipher recently said a single customer would be enough.

List price is about \$120 million – the cost of the 767-300 it replaces. But a prominent launch customer could probably haggle aircraft for as little as \$85 million.

“The airplane is 20 per cent more fuel efficient than the 767, so we are giving them that value at the same price,” Bair said. “It goes a couple of thousand miles further. It has much more cargo-carrying capability [and] a much more comfortable interior.”

In his briefing, Bair said the

intense competition. Boeing originally wanted only one manufacturer. Now it says two are possible.

“We are on track for an engine decision probably in mid-April,” Bair said. “Rolls Royce, Pratt & Whitney and General Electric have very competitive products.”

“If we do have two engines, you can change engine type on the wing in less than 24 hours. That requirement is being driven by the financial community so they will be able to re-market or to move an airplane from one operator to the other.”

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“At all costs we must draw the flower of our youth into pilot ing of aeroplanes”

Winston Churchill, House of Commons, July 28 1936.

By Dr Carlo Kopp

The RAAF’s bad news on aircrew retention and recruiting raises questions about how a downsized and less capable RAAF will recruit future aircrew – in a community which has high levels of access to overseas and domestic information on military aviation issues.

The Defence leadership is un-

F-111, JSF and aircrew recruitment

happy about Australian media scrutiny on issues like the Joint Strike Fighter selection and the retirement of the F-111. But the absence of local media coverage does not diminish the impact of such policy decisions upon the community age groups targeted in recruitment.

The ideal “wannabe fighter pilot” in 13 to 17 years; an individual who is highly intelligent, good at thinking on his feet, physically fit, highly

motivated, competitive and intensely interested in military aviation and flying. While Australia is large enough to supply the numbers required, persuading a big enough fraction that an air force fast-jet career is worth pursuing is another matter.

Over the last 25 years, this analyst has received countless letters,

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Up to now changing the engine involved many system changes, including re-engineering the flight deck. But in the case of the 7E7 these changes will be in soft ware.

The other innovation is that the 7E7 will be the first commercial aircraft with the primary structure in composites – a move which benefits Boeing subsidiary Hawker de Havilland, a leader in composites.

“One of the concerns is how to deal with ‘ramp rash’,” Bair said. “Our air planes get hit by ground service equipment all the time. Does it get damaged? How easy is it to repair?”

“With one customer we took a large piece of composite to their maintenance facilities. It was the same thickness as the belly skins of the air plane. They took 16-pound sledge hammers and metal punches and beat on it for over an hour

without being able to damage it.

“This material will be far more damage-resistant than aluminium. If it does get damaged – and it will, somebody will run into it with a fork lift – we have two repair methods. One takes about 40 minutes to apply on the ramp and allow the rest of the day. And we have a two-hour repair that will let you fly until the air plane goes into a hangar for more a permanent repair. That can be up to five years.”

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emails and telephone calls from ambitious young men and boys who want to wear Nomex and punch holes in the sky.

- Nearly all are highly intelligent, focussed, with an obsessive interest in fast-jet technology, operations. They have the “aura of invincibility” which comes with driving a top tier combat aircraft.
- Most are confident. They form their own judgements, often excessively so rather than accept the views of their seniors. They actively hunt information.
- 15 to 25 years ago such individuals learned from local military aviation journals. Today most of them fly jet fighter simulators, read Websites world wide and visit Net discussion groups.

A contemporary wannabe “boggy” forms his or her judgements on peer group views from Internet discussion groups and email correspondence with overseas peers.

In this environment, RAAF websites with fluffy content, expensive TV ads and lofty pronouncements carry less weight than empirically observable realities in RAAF force structuring and capability

ities. A would-be recruit cannot be sold on earnest pronouncements that the JSF is a “regionally superior” air combat fighter, or that getting rid of the F-111s is a smart idea.

They will spend long hours looking at overseas Websites and read overseas and local aviation journals. They will fantasise about blowing Sukhois out of the sky flying the F/A-22A Raptor – and have practised this again and again in cyberspace. They want to be part of an air force which is the top of the regional pack in capability and technology. They are not interested in defence budgets, internal DoD politics or what the Defence chiefs might be able to sell to Federal Cabinet.

Recent decisions to downsize the RAAF by F-111 retirement and the preference for the JSF over the F/A-22A will not sell to future aircrew, certainly not those with intelligence, confidence, independence and competitiveness that produce top-tier combat pilots.

The central issue is not as much numbers of possible recruits, but high-quality recruits. This is a group which has vast career options available and will not be easily seduced by fluffy advertising and rhetoric – these individuals are young, not dumb and they know it too.

The bottom line is that the RAAF does not exist separately from the community. It must be capable of fulfilling the expectations of the interested community. Credibility-damaging decisions are not the way to build community enthusiasm for future RAAF careers.

Whether the Defence leadership can sell an idea to Cabinet is irrelevant – the community groups the future RAAF depends on are much more literate in contemporary military aviation issues than many in the Defence community and the political leadership.

Future RAAF recruits will know that a JSF is not an F/A-22A and they will know that an F-111 is faster and carries more fire power further than an F/A-18A or JSF. What might sell in the mass media and Canberra political circles will not sell where it counts – in the minds and hearts of the young Australians who are to become our future warriors.

• *Self-promoting foot note: The individuals Dr Kopp describes above are prominent among HeadsUp downloaders, as are young men and women deeply interested in ground engineering careers. Yet ADF recruiting has never been interested in advertising in this journal, even at our low rates.*



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