



AVIATION WEEK EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE:

MRO/GLOBAL SUSTAINMENT BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

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Following up on the top priority action emanating from the November 2006 AVIATION WEEK Executive Roundtable, industry leaders and officials from Europe and America met September 13, 2007 in Brussels, Belgium to identify ways to enable global collaboration and support major, complex systems programs. Among the firsts for this meeting was the inclusion of the AeroSpace & Defense Industries Association (ASD), which represents aerospace and defense organizations within the European Union.

Hosted by Charles T. "Tom" Burbage, corporate vice president/general manager for F-35 Lightning II Global Integration at Lockheed Martin Aeronautics, and Anthony L. Velocci Jr., group editorial director of AVIATION WEEK, the AVIATION WEEK Executive Roundtable opened with a discussion of common needs across major aircraft platforms, to include the Eurofighter, A400M, and F-35 Lightning II. Key to the discussion was finding common needs and solutions to major sustainment issues, whether on-side the aircraft or at a depot/readiness center site.

The September 13 Executive Roundtable participants represented a variety of roles in program, management, sustainment/MRO operations, and companies providing services and products for global sustainment of aircraft used in coalition or NATO activities. The meeting was sponsored by Siemens Product Lifecycle Management

Software. John Graham, executive vice president-Siemens PLM Software, greeted guests who hailed from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, France, Germany and the United States. Companies represented included Diehl Aerospace, BAE Systems (U.K.), Eurofighter, Alenia Aeronautica, the United Nations World Food Programme, Rolls-Royce Deutschland Ltd & Co. KG, Rolls Royce Aero Repair and Overhaul, Industria de Turbo Propulsores, S. A. (ITP), Stork Aerospace, Fokker Services, EADS Defense & Security, the French Aerospace Industries Association, ASD and AIA.

Burbage opened the session by identifying some of the critical issues facing the Lockheed Martin-led team in terms of global collaboration and sustainment initiatives. The shift of focus for the F-35 team is toward sustainment and ramped up production, activity that will ramp up exponentially, beginning in 2012 when 30 aircraft will have been delivered, including 10 in operation with a U.S. Marine unit. By 2015, that number will exceed 300 with 52 different operating units. The least effective and worst answer would be to develop an entirely new footprint of service centers for each of those units, duplicating effort among programs and within units.

“The same types of issues face the Eurofighter and A400M,” Burbage said. “I believe that we together can develop an understanding and recommendations that will allow us to benefit from one another while not losing our competitive stance or impacting the concerns of our countries.”

The discussion was particularly timely for members of ASD. The organization stood up its new MRO Military Sector Group on September 12, identifying key issues and formulating plans for the future. In addition to representatives of this group, who represent industry, the meeting also included a representative from Aerospace Industries Association/U.S., David Pauling who heads AIA’s Technical Operations.

In addition to establishing relationships among the 40 individuals attending the meeting, the roundtable broke into smaller working groups to address the following:

1. Common issues faced by Eurofighter, A400M and F-35 as they proceed with lifecycle sustainment, and meeting customer objectives relating to availability, reliability, cycle time reduction, and cost.
2. Identification of common multi-national logistics concerns to accelerate efficiency and performance improvement in the areas of MRO/sustainment.
3. Discuss national sovereignty and impact to MRO/global sustainment synergies.

4. Identify steps forward to capitalize on strong relationships across countries that will support individual programs on an industry-wide basis.

Findings

The Executive Roundtable participants broke into small groups for initial discussion, then shared with the group as a whole their key findings. As a group they then determined a list of findings to move forward as an MRO/Global Sustainment issue from the program level.

- Bring together a broader group of global industry, association, and governmental organizations to study data exchange capabilities and to identify common supply chain elements across coalition system platforms. The Executive Roundtable believes that approximately 80% of this information is common to the degree that no intellectual property or security/sovereignty issues are involved; the goal is to identify this 80% and address to create efficiency, reduce time, increase readiness.
- Develop a forum that, if chartered properly, could affect policy change at the country level to support required military change. The example given was the U.K. Ministry of Defense dictate to cut costs by 25% across every platform and the policies needed to enable that, e.g. outsourcing of MRO.
- Develop a method to explore interoperability in terms of regionalized readiness centers, common assets and common data exchange standards.
- Identify a method to share lessons learned with regard to data, hardware and results of special initiatives. Examples ranged from development of people able to lead complex programs to enabling flow of money across multiple nations as part of multi-national program coalitions. This should also include key military MRO/sustainment issues and possible commercial solutions to similar issues.
- Establish high-level operational definitions and performance metrics. This might include standard parts coding, similar to that used in commercial aerospace.
- Develop models and process discipline with regard to change management as it applies not only to technical/design configuration but also with regard to political, industrial and legal parameters.
- Assure clear understanding across all industry organizations of the varied policy requirements with regard to MRO/sustainment. Germany's regulations, for instance, do not allow for on-side maintenance on operational aircraft, compared to the U.K. which does.

Next Steps

The findings of the Brussels roundtable will be incorporated into the content for the October 30 AVIATION WEEK Executive Roundtable being held in Phoenix, AZ, USA. The roundtable is being chaired by Christopher M. Chadwick, VP/GM Global Strike Systems, Boeing Integrated Defense.

A special thanks for assisting in coordination of this roundtable to the AeroSpace & Defense Industries Association in Europe, including Sec. Gen. Francois Gayet; Jean-Pierre Barthelemey, ASD Air Transport, R&T and Operations director; Gunter Lessman, director-ASD Standards; and Oscar Sanchez, ASD Operations manager.

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