

State aerospace firms ready to display, announce deals at Paris Air Show

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Connecticut's aerospace companies are putting final touches on preparations for the biennial Paris Air Show that opens on Monday in Le Bourget, France.

Hartford-based United Technologies Corp. and its Pratt & Whitney, Hamilton Sundstrand, and Sikorsky Aircraft subsidiaries in particular will make a point of seeking maximum exposure for their products at the show, where millions of dollars' worth of contracts also are customarily announced.

The economic downturn, which cast a pall over 2009's air show, isn't quite as severe this time around. But Raymond Jaworowski, senior aerospace analyst for Newtown-based Forecast International, said a lagging economy in the U.S. and elsewhere is still a factor.

"The general economy remains spotty, and this does raise questions about the long-term future of the commercial airliner market," Jaworowski said. Other obstacles to growth in the market exist as well, he said, including the upcoming imposition in 2012 of new stringent emissions standards and practices in Europe, which — barring successful legal challenges — will affect all airlines flying to and from the continent.

Overall, however, the commercial airliner market has rebounded strongly since 2009, Jaworowski said. “Activity at the Paris show should provide further evidence of this,” he added.

Airbus Industrie’s launch of a re-engined A320neo aircraft has focused much attention on the smaller, or “narrowbody” market, he said. East Hartford-based Pratt has been winning orders for its newest geared turbofan engines to power some of those Airbus models.

“Should Airbus continue to pick up significant orders for the A320neo, this will further push Boeing to respond in some fashion,” Jaworowski said of the perennial competition between the two major aircraft makers.

“Boeing could give some hints at the show as to its future narrowbody strategy,” he added. “All indications at this point are that it is strongly favoring the launch of an all-new narrowbody design.”

Canada’s Bombardier Aerospace also has a new CSeries aircraft competing at the lower end of the narrowbody market, which Jaworowski said is picking up orders after a lengthy slowdown.

“It will bear watching to see if Bombardier adds to the order book during the Paris show,” he said.

Pratt also makes engines for the Bombardier planes.

In the larger, or widebody aircraft market, “the main contest in the next several years will be between Airbus’ A350 XWB and Boeing’s 787 and 777,” Jaworowski said.

Boeing plans to display the 787, also called the Dreamliner, at the show and hopes to get the often-postponed aircraft into service in the next few months.

Pratt does not make an engine for the 787, but its Windsor Locks-based corporate sibling, Hamilton Sundstrand, has millions of dollars worth of equipment on each Dreamliner.

Pratt plans a series of presentations for next week’s show, and UTC has set up a designated air show website:

<http://utcaero.com>

to showcase its latest products and contract wins.

Included on Pratt’s schedule is the formal announcement of an engine contract for engines to power Airbus A321neo planes ordered by California-based International Lease Finance Corp. The tentative deal was announced in March and includes as many as 200 of Pratt’s new geared turbofan engines to power up to 100 aircraft. The initial agreement includes an order for 120 PW1100G engines for 60 aircraft. And ILFC also has options

for up to 80 additional engines for 40 additional aircraft.

No financial details were disclosed. But based on previous orders, the deal should be worth well over \$1 billion to Pratt if all options are exercised.

In addition to its equipment on the 787, Hamilton also is showcasing its products for the F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter, for which Pratt makes the jet engines, and those used on the Airbus A380 super jumbo aircraft.

Stratford-based Sikorsky, meanwhile, has scheduled presentations and briefings on its Black Hawk and Seahawk military helicopters.

The state's smaller aerospace companies also will be on hand for the show, including Bloomfield-based Kaman Aerospace and Aero Gear Inc. of Windsor.

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