

Not a single F-15, F-16, F/A-18, F-22 or F-35 to be seen!, Howard Wheeldon reports. Despite military delegations attending, orders for defence equipment at air shows such as Paris are very rare events indeed. This year was to be no exception. With no US owned military planes flying at Paris or in place, even as stationary exhibits, the stage was set for an increase in Russian military planes to display including the SU-35 multirole fighter aircraft, the YAK-130 military trainer and the Kamov Ka-52 Alligator helicopter. Confirmation that the four-nation Eurofighter Typhoon partnership had signed a deal with NETMA that would begin the process of MBDA Meteor Beyond Visual Range Missile system weapons integration to begin was welcomed.

Israeli company Elbit has been much in evidence over the past couple of days in Paris, but some of the messages that have emerged from various Paris briefings include reports in Defense News of Boeing seeing order prospects for between 10 and up to 30 C-17 aircraft, for approximately 20 KC-46 aircraft and 25 P-8's. If correct I would assume that the C-17 number variance includes the higher expectation including the possibility that Saudi Arabia will order the aircraft, and the lower to be inclusive of India and possibly Qatar. Meanwhile Defense News is apparently quoting a Boeing source as anticipating international orders for the V-22 tilt-rotor programme in the region of 100 aircraft spread over the next nine years. The assumption is that this would include sales of the aircraft to Israel and the UAE. Other likely markets are Brazil, Canada, France, India and Singapore.

Elsewhere, Bloomberg reported that Lockheed Martin F-35 aircraft deliveries could rise to 100 units per annum in 2020 against anticipated 2013 production of 36 aircraft. However, given that the sequestration impact does not come in until 2015 and that current DoD plans suggest a 2014 purchase of 29 aircraft, I am not sure how either of these numbers stack up. The article also suggested that production costs could drop from \$120m to \$85m per plane, although this has not been verified and there is no mention of how any decline in production cost is divided across the three variants of the aircraft. Separately, I understand that in a further hearing yesterday of the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee discussion on the F-35 programme was altogether upbeat. Of particular interest is that the tone with regard to programme risk was, I am reliably told cautiously optimistic which translated should, I believe be interpreted as being very positive. Software and reliability both remain issues of concern but definite cost improvements were noted in the hearing. In terms of production, the Under Secretary for Defense told the hearing that there would be a further meeting held in the autumn to discuss the number of planned DoD F-35 aircraft buys for 2015.

Reuters reported on Tuesday that within a separate Paris briefing, Lockheed Martin disclosed expectations of an additional 150 to 200 C-130J unit sales spread over the next decade. This is particularly interesting not only because engines used on the aircraft are made by Rolls-Royce

(Allison) in the US, but that August 2014 marks the 60th anniversary of the first Lockheed C-130 Hercules aircraft flight.

Meanwhile Boeing and Embraer announced confirmation of a partnership with Embraer on that company's KC-390 military transport which would see the US plane maker taking charge of selling the aircraft in the US, UK and Middle East markets. Given that the UK is a well-established C-130J user and is in the process of acquiring the A400M, I doubt that there will be any opportunity here except perhaps for ultimate replacement in the years ahead of the two second hand BAe146 aircraft that have only just entered service with the Royal Air Force.

Airbus Military marked the occasion of the Paris Air Show to deliver its 100th C-295 multi-role tactical transport aircraft. Now in service with 15 countries worldwide, the current order book is for 121 aircraft. Separately and ahead of the first official delivery to the French Air Force on Bastille Day, the brilliant A400M military transporter has been delighting crowds as it swooped and swirled over the Le Bourget show ground.