BOEING 787 DREAMLINER FINALLY TAKES TO THE SKIES IN FIRST TEST FLIGHT

Boeing has made the first successful test flight of its 787 Dreamliner, almost two and a half years after the new, fuel-efficient plane was supposed to fly.

The lightweight carbon and titanium plane, promising to save airlines million of dollars in fuel and maintenance costs, has been hampered by a shortage of bolts, faulty design and a two-month strike.

But this week Boeing sent the plane on a four-hour flight from Paine Field in Everett, Washington, to test it as it flew around the local area.

The test was just the first in a series of checks which will be completed on six 787s over the next nine months in order to obtain the necessary Federal Aviation Administration certification.

Boeing executives say the tests, which will see the planes running around the clock, will be like 'running a small airline'. Tests will include practising mid-air stalls, dives and steep banks, as well as seeing how the plane copes in extremes of heat and cold. However, experts insist the Dreamliner has a 'long way to go' before it proves to be a success.

The Dreamliner has proved very popular with airlines, who like the concept of a mid-sized plane being able to carry over 250 people for very long distances. Since work began on the plane in 2004, airlines have ordered 840 of the aircraft - making it $140 Billion for Boeing.

However, the five production delays over the past three years and the six postponements of the first flight have stretched customers' patience ***Details Details***

QUESTEK WINS SBIR PHASE II AWARD FROM THE US ARMY

QuesTek Innovations LLC was recently awarded a Phase II Small Business Innovation Research project from the US Army to continue to apply QuesTek's Materials by Design® technology to the design and development of a new castable titanium alloy for Army applications.

The aim of the project is to develop new castable titanium alloy compositions, by exploring designs that incorporate lower cost alloying components and processing steps. Alloy design activities will include minimizing sensitivity to elevated impurity levels encountered in non aerospace grade stock materials. The final composition will first be produced and characterized using simplified test geometries, and then at final scale into specific Army components. The design property goals will consider cast titanium alloy Ti-6Al-4V as one baseline.

A new low cost titanium alloy with improved castability could see widespread adoption across many Army and Department of Defense platforms, where the exceptional strength to weight and corrosion resistance properties of titanium can be combined with the cost savings of near net shape processing. The new alloy has significant potential application in energy, chemical processing, marine, transportation and other commercial and industrial sectors. Benefits of the new alloy will likely include reduced machining costs, less material waste, lower part count, faster speed to market, greater equipment durability, and lighter, more efficient equipment. ***Details***

OSAKA TITANIUM TECHNOLOGIES TO CUT SPONGE EXPORT PRICES

Osaka Titanium Technologies are concluding the price negotiation of sponge titanium with offshore rolled titanium makers to reduce the price by around 15% for 2010 shipment from 2009. The price decreases for 2 years in a row after the price decreased by 10% to 15% in 2009 due to slow airplane demand. The price cut would impact on price negotiation with domestic rolled titanium makers in spring 2010.

KENMARE WILL BENEFIT FROM EXXARO'S DECISION TO SHUT DOWN TITANIUM MINE

Kenmare stands to benefit from the closure of a South African titanium mineral mine and the decision of its owner not to open a replacement.

The closure will mean that 5pc of global titanium supply will have been removed from the market this year.

Exxaro, the group closing the near-depleted Hillendale titanium deposit said it will not be pressing ahead with a replacement mine. Industry experts had widely expected it to open a new mine at Fairbreeze in South Africa.

The decision is a boost for other titanium producers, particularly Kenmare which is a relatively new player in the industry.

Hillendale supplied some 2.5pc of the global titanium minerals market last year.

Davy analyst Caren Crowley said that although demand for titanium minerals contracted abruptly in the first half of 2009, it recovered during the latter part of the year with some producers managing to double sales during the third quarter. ***Details***

ATI'S HASSEY NOT FRETTING ABOUT TITANIUM OVERHANG

While a large part of the titanium industry frets about a huge inventory overhang in aerospace, the top executive of Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI) argues that there may be good reason for maintaining these stocks.

L. Patrick Hassey, chairman, president and chief executive officer of the Pittsburgh-based specialty metals producer, suggested to investors this week that a pickup in demand for aerospace titanium is likely to coincide with a global recovery in non-aircraft markets. ***Details***

FORGING PRESS REBUILD

Alcoa has announced that funding has been approved for the complete repair and refurbishment of its 50,000tn forging press at the company's Cleveland Works. The project will make Cleveland Works a producer of large aluminum and titanium forgings for the defense, aerospace and industrial markets. Combined with earlier approved investments to support production of the F35 Joint Strike Fighter and other efficiency projects, Alcoa plans to invest more than USD 110 million in Cleveland Works through 2011. ***Details***

TITANIUM SPONGE UNIT TO BE COMMISSIONED NEXT YEAR

The titanium sponge unit, a joint project of the KMML and the VSSC by using the DMRL (Defence Metallurgical Research Lab) technology, will be commissioned in September 2010.

Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd (KMML) MD K S Sreenivas told a press conference that with the commissioning of the titanium sponge unit the KMML would become one of the important industrial concerns on a global scale.

He said that the KMML would launch Zero Liquid Effluent Programme as part of its silver jubilee celebrations of its commissioning. ***Details***

KERALA EYES SRI LANKAN MINERAL SAND FOR TITANIUM PROJECTS

The Indian state government of Kerala is exploring the possibility of importing mineral sand from Sri Lanka especially from the war-free Eastern region, State Minister of Industries Elamaran Kareem told a visiting Business Times journalist in Trivendrum.

The interview was on the sidelines of a visit by two journalists from Sri Lanka on invitation by the Kerala Industrial Infrastructure Development Cooperation (KINFRA) to the KINFRA film and video park. ***Details***

RTI's TITANIUM SPONGE EXIT LEAVES SINGLE PROJECT IN US

Cancellation of a new Mississippi titanium sponge operation leaves just one project left in what was once an ambitious era of front-end expansions planned for the United States.

RTI International Metals Inc. said it will "indefinitely idle" plans to build a $300-million sponge facility in Hamilton, Mississippi, and has instead signed additional long-term sponge purchase agreements with two Japanese producers, which means it will remain the only totally non-integrated domestic producer for the foreseeable future.

The 20-million pound-per-year operation was initially due to go on-stream in 2010. As a result, RTI expects to incur asset impairment and related charges of $65 million to $75 million. ***Details***