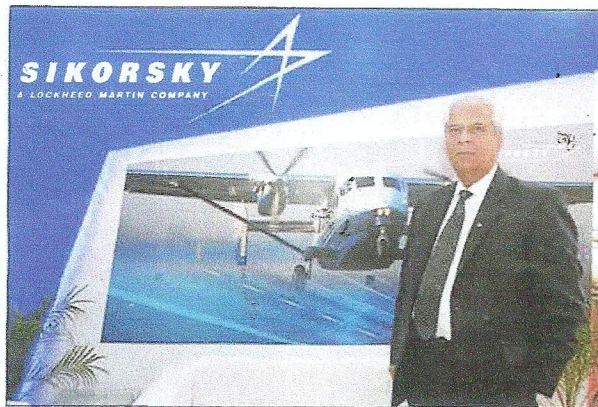


Sikorsky highlights the M28 Skytruck

Sikorsky has built a formidable name for its military and commercial applications over the years, but at the India aviation show this year, the company is upbeat about its M28 Twin Turboprop Aircraft. **Air Vice Marshal (Retd) Arvind Walla, Regional Executive-India & South Asia, Sikorsky** gave us a peak into the M28 Skytruck and what he expects from the Indian market. Designed and developed by the PZL Mielec (a Sikorsky company) into a westernised version powered by 820 kW (1100shp) Pratt & Whitney PT6A-65B turboprops with five-blade Hartzell propellers, Sikorsky is pitching its Polish made aircraft as a numerous transport variant application.

Its key feature is its capability for short take-off and landing (STOL) making it an extremely versatile offering which can be configured as a commercial passenger transport aircraft, cargo, paratroop or a combination application like disaster relief and so on. In a commercial configuration the Skytruck can carry up to 19 passengers and the aircraft can take-off from as less as a 1800 ft runway flying to a range of 860 nm or 1,592 kms making it highly operational and economical aircraft. "This aircraft will address the present requirement spelt out by the Government of India to connect the Tier II cities, especially the North-Eastern part of the country as well as the Western and South-Western part of the country," says Walla.

He feels that from a commercial standpoint the aircraft gives opportunity to connect the lesser known cities which operate a grassy or paved runways giving the passengers, a time and cost effective option for transport from one city to another. "There are close to 400 operational airstrips that aren't



Air Vice Marshal (Retd) Arvind Walla

paved or used for full commercial application. This is where the M28 will be useful in a passenger configuration. But the aircraft can be configured in other application as well which make it very versatile."

Sikorsky is already in dialogue with some potential customers including the officials from the Ministry. The company is geared and equipped to deliver the aircraft

as early as 4 to 6 months to any customer from the day that the order is placed. Walla feels that given the India terrain and distances the potential number of the aircraft that will be required in India will be over 80 atleast.

The M28 has been in operation since 1993 with approximately 100 aircraft in operation today. The Polish forces operates the highest

numbers of aircraft with the total of 42 (25 by the Air Force, 16 by the Navy and one by the Border Guard) followed by the United States, being the second largest operator with an undisclosed number. The smaller countries round up the other operating countries which include Guyana, Venezuela, Suriname, Vietnam, Nepal, Indonesia and Jordan.

Closer to the commercial helicopter market, Sikorsky has witnessed a sluggish demand in the Indian market due to the drop in the oil prices. But considering the correctional GDP and the potential demand Walla is hoping that the time changes as the company is equipped to meet this demands. "But what is important to note is that the government is taking a step in the right direction and as the processes are being articulated it speaks volumes of their intentions to ensure that the industry grows and thereby generate employment and revenue for the industry, which is the need of the hour." ■

- Bhavya Desai



Sikorsky M28 Skytruck