

RUAG, Dornier OEM, Sets Up 228 Production

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The Venezuelan government last year ordered a batch of 10 228s for operation in remote areas and hot-and-high elevations.

After selling all eight Dornier 228s batch built in a new-generation configuration, RUAG Aviation (Chalet 120, Static A5, Hall 4 B77) is reconfiguring its supply chain to deliver a minimum of four and up to 12 of the 19-seat aircraft every year, beginning in 2016.

And the MRO-specialist-turned-OEM is offering a range of gap-bridging solutions to ensure its product remains competitive on delivery timescale.

"Requirements in that market segment can change quickly," says Pirmin Berger, director of marketing and communications at RUAG Aviation. "It's not like in the [A320](#) market, where you may use the aircraft for 10 years and it's always going to fly Paris to Helsinki or whatever. This market is much more flexible; quicker changes are coming, and one has to respond to them. It's like dancing a tango with the market."

To this end, RUAG is willing to offer older 228s to customers who need an aircraft while their new one is being built. These will be sourced from users with temporary spare capacity among the existing 228 fleet.

"Some customers need larger aircraft," Berger explains, "but don't want to sell the smaller ones because they may need them later. They may want to put them into a three-year operating lease so they can be used somewhere else."

RUAG assembles the Dornier 228s at its facility in Oberpfaffenhofen, near Munich, though large elements of the work are done by third parties. For the eight 228s already supplied, aerostructures were built by HAL in India; going forward, this work will be carried out by another Indian subcontractor, Tata. The switch was made to help both RUAG and HAL concentrate on core business.

"HAL build the Dornier 228-212 under license, but not in the new-generation configuration, with the new engine, cockpit and propellers," Berger says. "Naturally they're very focused on this, and on supporting the fleets of their customers in India. Tata's core competence is aerostructures, and we need a supply-chain partner that focuses on that." Assembly has begun of fuselage parts and wing panels for two aircraft this year, according to Volker Wallrodt, senior vice president for business jets, Do228 and components.

The pause in production to change the subcontractor is allowing RUAG to establish what the company hopes will be a production line kept busy for at least a decade.

"The 19-passenger aircraft market is not a tremendous growth market, but it is growing," Berger says. "We see that in blue-chip airlines and with maritime-policing and special-mission aircraft. We need to sustainably deliver a certain amount of aircraft into the market, so we decided to realign the supply chain to start serial, rather than batch, production."

RUAG is showing a modernized 228 turboprop here at Paris.

Source: Paris Air Show News / Angus Batey