NEW AIRCRAFT FOR ARMY AVIATION

Statement by the Minister for the Army, the Hon. Malcolm Fraser, M.P.

The Army is to spend an estimated $2¼ million to purchase 12 turbo-prop light aircraft within the next 12 months.

Announcing this today, the Minister for the Army, Mr. Malcolm Fraser, said the Army had an immediate requirement for additional light fixed wing aircraft to supplement the small number of Cessnas now in service.

In conjunction with Department of Air the Army had conducted a complete evaluation of the most suitable aircraft available in Australia, U.S.A., United Kingdom and Europe.

The turbine engined Pilatus Porter, designed in Switzerland specifically for short take-off and landing (STOL) operations in the Swiss Alps, was found to be the only machine suitable to meet all of the Army's requirements.

Included in the overall costs of the project were spare engines, avionics, spare parts, ground handling equipment and training aids.

The first Pilatus would be in service before the end of 1967 and the remainder by May next year.

The new aircraft would increase the capability of the Army in its recognised roles of reconnaissance, observation, and emergency supply and casualty evacuation.

The Pilatus had excellent STOL performance and exceptional slow speed handling characteristics.

It was a simple, rugged, high-wing monoplane with fixed landing gear. It could take-off within 100 yards and land in 70 yards.

In its Army role the single-engine Pilatus would have a normal all-up weight of 4850 lbs, would cruise at 120 knots, and if required could carry up to seven passengers.

Lists: A and B

Further information:

CANBERRA: Major Allan S. Hinds
(65-4061) (49-6030)

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Fraser, Malcolm

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