MRJ FIRST DELIVERY EXPECTED TO BE DELAYED AGAIN

News / Manufacturer



Mitsubishi Aircraft Corp. is expected to announce a further delay to the Mitsubishi Regional Jet (MRJ) program on Jan. 23.

Japanese newspaper The Nikkei reported that Mitsubishi Aircraft parent Mitsubishi Heavy Industries has confirmed the delay of first delivery of the MRJ90 to Japan's All Nippon Airways (ANA) to mid-2020. Mitsubishi Aircraft, which has called a press conference for Jan. 23 to provide an MRJ program update, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Mitsubishi Aircraft had been officially targeting first delivery to ANA by mid-2018, though Mitsubishi Aircraft executives had talked in recent months about achieving first delivery by the end of 2018. Mitsubishi Aircraft Corp. America chairman and CEO Masao Yamagami told ATW in November that it would be "challenging" to achieve first delivery in 2018.

The first delivery of the first Japanese-produced commercial aircraft since the NAMC YS-11 turboprop was originally targeted for the first quarter of 2014. But the MRJ program has been delayed numerous times, with first flight not occurring until November 2015, more than three years late.

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Four MRJ90 flight test aircraft have flown, and three have been transferred to the US, where the majority of MRJ flight testing is occurring. A fourth flight test aircraft is slated to join the other three aircraft at Grant County International Airport in Moses Lake, Washington state, where US MRJ flight testing is based. A fifth flight test aircraft will remain in Japan.

Speaking to ATW in November, Yamagami noted that it has been 50 years since the NAMC YS-11 was certified. “This process is completely different than 50 years ago,” he said. “At the time, aerodynamics was the most important issue. But now it is software. This is a fly-by-wire aircraft … It is similar to detecting a computer bug. [The challenge for the MRJ program is determining] how to delete those bugs as quickly as possible. Or do we find something more serious and have to make changes to the software?”

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