THALES EYING LAUNCH FOR HEAD-WORN AIRCRAFT DISPLAY

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Thales is nearing the end of the proof-of-concept phase for its TopMax head-worn aircraft display and hopes to launch product development later this year. Thus far, a prototype display has logged about 40 hours of flight-testing aboard turboprop aircraft, as well as 10 hours in a simulator. The trials have shown that the right eye can be used, regardless of the pilot's dominant eye, said Thales Avionics cockpit marketing manager Guillaume Lapeyronnie. This single-eye configuration allows for a simpler, lower-cost product than a more complex dual-eye display, he explained.

TopMax can merge infrared images and synthetic terrain (enhanced and synthetic vision systems), adding traffic information from ADS-B or Tcas. Thales expects the device will allow “special authorization” Category 1 landings.

Compared with a conventional aircraft-mounted head-up display, TopMax provides an unlimited field of vision and easier installation at half the cost, according to Thales. Wearing the device could entail some discomfort, Lapeyronnie acknowledged, but he emphasized that TopMax is not intended to be worn for long periods. Competitive advantages are the color display and easier installation—no projection system has to be placed in the cockpit and no computer has to be added in the avionics bay, he noted.

Thales says it will go ahead with full development this year if some “serious prospects” become launch customers. Entry into service is targeted for 2019.

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