Fully equipped sections of the different AI aircraft are produced in various factories of the four partners throughout Europe, which in turn rely on an extensive worldwide network of systems and structural component suppliers. These sections are then transported to assembly locations in either Hamburg for the A321 and A319 and to Toulouse for all other models.

Airbus History

The idea of the "Airbus" was conceived as part of an Anglo-French initiative dating back to early 1965. During this period, air traffic was growing at a much faster pace than currently being witnessed today. Hawker-Siddley of the UK and Breguet-Nord of France originally pursued a twin-engine, wide body, short haul aircraft provisionally named the HBN 100. The idea was later merged with Sud-Aviation's Galion project to eventually become known as the A300 Airbus. Five German companies (Messerschmitt, VFW, Siebel, Hamburger Flugzeugbau, and Dornier) followed with interest the Anglo-French discussions for the proposed Airbus and late in 1966 formed Arbeitsgemeinschaft Airbus (later became Deutsche Airbus) to manage the German share of the design study.

The A300B

Problems associated with the commercial credibility of the A300 threatened the collapse of the entire project. This lead Henri Ziegler, head of Sud Aviation at the time, to assemble a small team to secretly and quickly redesign the aircraft utilizing a significant amount of existing American technology. The original Airbus was, therefore, redefined from the A300 to the A300B. Turbulence surrounding the relationship between the original partners would lead to the withdrawal of British government support in April 1969. Shortly thereafter, Germany and France signed a Memorandum of Agreement which clarified and reaffirmed their determination to proceed with the Airbus project. In seeking to retain a political and industrial balance in the Airbus initiative, the German state financially supported the efforts of Hawker-Siddley to remain within the program, thus it became a major subcontractor with responsibility for the wing design and development. The Dutch government also agreed to contribute 6.6% of the A300B development costs in return for manufacturing wing slats and flaps by Fokker as an associate. Overall, this program enjoyed only limited success, however, a sale to Eastern Airlines early in 1978 allowed the consortium to reach a commercial milestone fuelling enthusiasm to build on its technical foundation.

Introducing A310 and A320

With the official launch of the A310 in July 1978 and, after a period of courting British allegiance by both American and European interests, the British government announced new agreements making British Aerospace ((BAe) a consolidation of Hawker Siddley and British Aircraft Corp.) a full partner of AI effective Jan 1, 1979. BAe would assume a 20% interest in the consortium, reducing the holdings