

Airlines. The Colombian Air Force and the Colombian National Police are each currently employing ten Bell Textron 212 helicopters.

With past sales of helicopters to the Air Force and National Police, there should be opportunities for companies in the maintenance and overhaul fields. Moreover, there will be a continual requirement for helicopters on the part of the Defense Ministry, which the Commercial Section of the Embassy in Bogotá will continue to monitor. Additionally, the Colombian armed forces will have requirements for other fixed-wing aircraft and simulators for training. The key to being a successful vendor to the Defense Ministry is a selecting a capable local agent who can actually create the demand and political will for the project. Likewise, attractive financing will be critical as could a Government-to-Government structure using the services provided by the Canadian Commercial Corporation who have experience dealing with the Ministry.

The modernization and privatization of over 100 Colombian airports, scheduled to take place over the next few years, will present possibilities to many Canadian equipment suppliers in a variety of fields. The erection of control towers, construction of runways, acquisition of security systems and the upgrading of navigational and communication devices pose opportunities for Canadian advanced technology suppliers. All told, the Colombian Government is investing over US\$40 million in airport infrastructure during 1997 alone.

The Colombian Civil Aviation Authority (Aeronautica Civil) is entering into contracts with private firms for the management of the country's airports. Aeronautica Civil is considering developing a 20-year Master Plan for the decentralization and operation of each airport. The Plan will specify the works which will have to be undertaken by the firm during the term of the management contract.

The Plan will make investment by national and international bidders that much more attractive. The first airports to be decentralized were those in Cartagena and Barranquilla. Scheduled next for decentralization are the airports in Bogotá, Cali and Rionegro. The Aeronautica Civil will proceed no further with decentralization until an evaluation of the Cartagena and Barranquilla efforts has been made.