

News About: Mitsui Seiki (USA) Inc.
563 Commerce Street
Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417
Contact: Scott Walker (201) 337-1300
Agency Contact: Lynn Gorman (203) 266-5831; lynn@gorcomm.com

Resurgence of Jig Boring Has Broader Implications

[Franklin Lakes, NJ – February 2006] Mitsui Seiki, one of world's only remaining suppliers of jig boring machines, now has the largest backlog since 1986. The company has been quoting lead times of 18 months for the most recent orders. The sudden resurgence in demand for this equipment has some interesting implications.

Scott Walker, President of Mitsui Seiki USA said: "Jig borers are, in terms of accuracy, mother machines -- the ultra precision equipment machinery builders use to make their own products. There was a large worldwide demand for jig borers during the 1980s, but virtually no demand from 1990-2003."

One of the factors that brought about the demise of the jig borer marketplace was the sturdiness of the equipment. Jig borers rarely wear out. Therefore, Walker believes major machine tool builders are placing these new orders not to replace existing machines but to increase their ultra precision machining capacity. This could mean that machine tool builders are looking to achieve major improvements in the accuracy of their own equipment.

Conditions in the aerospace market are contributing to this trend. The development of the Air Force tactical fighter will be moving forward at a pace slower than had been originally anticipated. Therefore, it appears that the F15 and F18 fighters will remain in service for another 15 to 20 years. To keep these aircraft in top condition, military facilities and subcontractors will rely heavily on jig boring machines to rework critical components such as gearboxes.

Walker noted that similar pressures exist in the commercial aircraft markets. Orders taken recently by the world's major aircraft manufacturers are likely to push demand for high tech alloys like Titanium 5553, Inconel®, Monel, Hastalloy and Waspalloy to the limit. This can be relieved somewhat by reworking rather than replacing critical components. This thought process could account for some of the demand for jig borers.

Walker said that Mitsui Seiki, which manufactures three models of jig boring machines, is committed to this market. In fact, initiatives are underway at the company to make design improvements to the current offerings.

For more information, contact Mitsui Seiki USA, Inc., (201) 337-1300.

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