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October 2022

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Industry riding 'momentum' and 'tailwinds' - NBAA-BACE 2022

The 2022 edition of the NBAA Business Aviation Convention and Exhibition (NBAA-BACE) is in full swing in Orlando, Florida, as this slightly delayed edition of Airborne is written. The three-day event, which opened on 18 October, is returning to the Orange County Convention Centre – which escaped the devastation inflicted by Hurricane Ian on other parts of Florida – for the first time since 2018 after the in-person event was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic.

In the face of economic pressures, inflation and the risk of global recession, NBAA president and CEO Ed Bolen remained upbeat prior to the opening of this year's event, saying: "We're very hopeful that the momentum that we've seen, and the tailwinds, will continue into the New Year." This optimism, he explained, was based on the knowledge that "the inherent values of business aviation – the ability to get where you need to be when you need to be, safely, securely and predictably" do not change during downturns.

Bolen highlighted that sustainability, workforce, safety and technology would be key discussion topics at NBAA-BACE 2022, which attracted some 800 exhibitors and a static display featuring more than 70 aircraft. OEMs are clearly demonstrating continued investment in new models. Gulfstream Aerospace chose not to exhibit at NBAA-BACE 2021 in Las Vegas because it had other priorities after the Covid pandemic. In Orlando, Gulfstream is back in force with a full suite of aircraft – the G280, G500 and G650ER, as well as two examples of both the G600 and G700.

French manufacturer Dassault is also displaying a full-size mock-up of its flagship Falcon 10X, along with examples of the Falcon 2000LX, Falcon 6X and Falcon 8X. Textron Aviation's family of aircraft includes the Citation M2 Gen2 making its show debut alongside a mock-up of the Cessna Danali turboprop, which has been designed to replace the venerable Cessna 208 Caravan. Canadian manufacturer Bombardier is also debuting the new Challenger 3500 ahead of its initial customer delivery, along with examples of both the Global 6500 and Global 7500. Of the 'big five', Embraer has a more modest line-up comprising two Phenom 300 and single examples of the Praetor 500 and 600.

Vista Global makes programme changes

Vista Global, the parent of specialist programme operators including VistaJet and XO Jet, posted a 43% uptick in membership in the first half of 2022. One of the drivers of this growth, it said, had been a large increase in younger members. To cater to demand from this demographic, Vista is introducing a new VJ25 membership category for VistaJet customers, a three-year subscription plan aimed at customers who fly between 25 and 49 hours per year. VistaJet's previous minimum level was 50 hours per year. The Group has also replaced the existing tiered membership programme for XO Jet with a single system that offers instant booking of private flights without fees. The system, which requires a USD100,000 refundable deposit, provides access to the entire Vista Global fleet of 2,450 aircraft worldwide.

Vista Global founder and chairman Thomas Flohr said: "The evolution and simplification of our offering reaffirms Vista's commitment to offering a full suite of flexible solutions for all members across VistaJet and XO. We have listened to our clients to understand their rapidly changing needs and we have optimised our membership structure accordingly."

Volatile bizav traffic in Europe and North America

Both the European and North American bizav markets are showing significant volatility according to the latest bizav traffic figures produced by Hamburg-based analyst WINGX.

Hurricane Ian, which caused destruction and loss of life in Florida and states across the lower eastern seaboard, had a significant impact on bizav traffic levels in North America. Week 39 – 27 September to 3 October – saw bizjet flights down by 9% over week 38 and 5% down on the same week in 2021. By week 40, however, North American traffic had begun to bounce back with overall levels 11% higher than pre-pandemic levels of 2019 although still 5% below than the record-breaking highs of 2021.

In Europe, traffic is conspicuously slowing down. Overall levels recorded to the end of week 40 (10 October) showed traffic down by 16% when compared to the same period last year. Although these figures are still 5% above 2019, the fall is significant. The main source of traffic decline was in the charter market. Traffic fell noticeably in the UK, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Spain and Portugal where charter demand slowed after a very busy summer holiday period.

AVIATION SERVICES HUB:

Aircraft registration

It may be a cliché, but there is no 'one-size-fits-all' aircraft registry. Several new registries have been launched over the last few years and more are in the pipeline. Many existing registries have also made changes to their offering by expanding the scope of acceptable aircraft operation and ownership. Each is seeking to attract owners and operators of corporate aircraft – a comparatively small but highly lucrative market – with what they consider to be a unique selling point.

The reasons for registering an aircraft outside the owner's home jurisdiction are many and various, and it should always be remembered that what might be an appropriate register for one client may not be suitable for another. All credible registries must be able to offer outstanding service, cost efficiency, flexibility in terms of acceptance of aircraft and crew standards, as well as providing security, confidentiality and political neutrality. Some may also offer potential tax savings and the benefits of asset protection and limitation of liability through corporate ownership.

Strong market forecast for new bizjets

The annual Global Business Aviation Outlook produced by Honeywell Aerospace makes encouraging reading for OEMs. According to its latest forecast, the bizav market could see up to 8,500 new jet deliveries over the next ten years with a total value of some USD274 billion. Honeywell estimates that there will be 700 deliveries this year, with a 17% increase in 2023, while its overall forecast shows a marked increase on the data issued last year.

“Demand for new business jets is as high as we’ve seen since 2015, and we expect high levels of demand and expenditures for new aircraft for several more years,” said Heath Patrick, President, Americas Aftermarket at Honeywell. “The business aviation industry is greatly benefitting from a wave of first-time users and buyers due in part to changing habits brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. The business aviation sector is expected to recover to 2019 delivery and expenditure levels by 2023, which is much sooner than previously expected.”

Corporate aircraft news

Gulfstream Aerospace delivered the 500th Gulfstream G650/G650ER on 26 September, a decade after FAA certification. The original G650 was publicly unveiled on 13 March 2008 and made its first flight on 25 November 2009. FAA certification was received on 7 September 2012. The manufacturer announced the longer range G650ER in May 2014 with FAA approval following just five months later. Analysis confirms that the G650/G650ER holds an 80% market share for bizjets that can over 7,000nm (12,964km) non-stop.

Two weeks earlier, Gulfstream confirmed that the FAA and EASA, the US and European regulators, had both granted approval for a software fix to its G500 and G600 aircraft. This modification was made to address an unsafe condition identified in an airworthiness directive issued for the types in May that imposed stricter operating limitations on landings. It said modifications to the fleet of 170 in service were completed last month. The required software fix will also allow four deliveries deferred from Q2 to be completed.

The second production Gulfstream G700 large business jet made its first flight from the manufacturer’s plant in Savannah, Georgia, on 8 September. The aircraft, a three-metre stretch of the G650, is fully outfitted and will be used as an additional testbed for the G700’s interior.

Pratt & Whitney Canada received approval from Transport Canada on 14 September for the PW812GA engine that is to power the new Gulfstream G400 twin. The G400, which was launched last year, is due to enter service in 2025.

A week later Rolls-Royce gained EASA approval for the Pearl 700 engine that is to power the Gulfstream G700 and G800, which are both due for certification during 2023. It is the second member of the Pearl engine family for the business aviation market. The first, the Pearl 15, was the exclusive option for Bombardier’s Global 5500 and Global 6500, while the Pearl 10X, the third and most powerful member, is being developed to power Dassault’s new flagship aircraft, the Falcon 10X.

The first Bombardier Challenger 3500 entered service on 20 September, making several demonstration flights and exhibiting at the NBAA prior to its delivery to US customer Les Goldberg, Chairman and CEO of Entertainment Technology Partners. The Challenger 3500 was unveiled in September 2021 and features enhancements to both the flight deck and interior over the current Challenger 350.

Japan’s Honda Aircraft has unveiled a new upgrade package for the HondaJet Elite which it has dubbed Elite II. The enhancements increase the aircraft’s range, add ground spoilers, a stabilised approach and new interior designs. The range of the Elite II is 1,547nm (2,865km) – an increase of 110nm (203km) over the Elite – and it will also feature an auto-throttle system and Garmin Autoland technology.

French manufacturer Daher has delivered the 1,100th example of its TBM family of turboprop singles.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

DHC-1 Chipmunk



CATEGORY

Classic single piston

MANUFACTURER

de Havilland Canada, Canada

ENGINE

1 x de Havilland Gipsy Major 1C piston

LENGTH

7.75 m

WINGSPAN

10.46 m

RANGE

417 km

MAX. SPEED

166 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

2

NO. OF CREW

2

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

998 kg

DESCRIPTION

The de Havilland Canada DHC-1 Chipmunk is primarily known as a military training aircraft – in fact, King Charles III learned to fly on the type in the late 1960s as Prince of Wales. The Chipmunk was designed by the Canadian manufacturer to replace the iconic Tiger Moth and a total of nearly 1,300 examples were produced between 1946 and 1956. The aircraft has demonstrated its longevity as many Chipmunks remain flying around the world having been sold to individuals and companies following retirement from military service.

The Chipmunk made its first flight on 21 May 1946 and it was purchased in substantial numbers by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force along with other air arms. The aircraft was also produced in large numbers under licence in the UK and remained in service as a trainer until 1996. The Chipmunk was also produced on a much smaller scale in Portugal, whose air force continued to operate the aircraft well into the 21st century.