

## The 'big five' OEMs - a challenging 2023 but a strong year ahead

The 'big five' bizav aircraft manufacturers all publish their annual review of delivery numbers in January. Each has faced challenges – from delayed certification of new models to continued supply chain issues – but they have all forecast strong or stronger performances for the year ahead.

Savannah-based Gulfstream Aerospace had expected FAA certification of its new Gulfstream G700 flagship by the end of 2023. This did not happen, so the 15 units it had expected to deliver before the end of the year were not handed over. Gulfstream's forecast delivery figures for 2023 were therefore lower and revenues were also down an estimated USD1 billion. Certification is now expected by the end of Q1. As a result, Gulfstream delivered 111 aircraft – 89 large cabin and 22 super mid-size G280 – in 2023, fewer than the 120 delivered in 2022 (96/24) and well short of its original forecast of 133 to 135 units. However, the OEM is looking forward to a strong 2024 and expects to deliver up to 160 new aircraft, including 50 of the newly certified G700. This number would be even higher, it said, but the G280 is built in Tel Aviv and production faces disruption due to the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Canadian OEM Bombardier delivered 15 more aircraft in 2023 than the previous year. The company delivered 75 Globals and 63 Challengers, up from figures of 70 and 50 respectively in 2022. It forecasts a further rise in deliveries for 2024 to a total between 150 and 155, levels not seen since 2016. The increase was due in large part to the easing of supply chain issues and growth is predicted to continue in 2025 with the anticipated certification of its new flagship Global 8500.

Like Gulfstream, Textron Aviation deliveries fell in 2023. The OEM delivered 168 jet aircraft, down from 178 in 2022. The 2023 inventory comprised 24 Citation Longitude and 41 Citation Latitude, with 105 CitationJet marques making up the remainder. Textron said it expects higher deliveries in 2024, assisted by increased manufacturing capacity and the introduction of both the Citation Ascend and the CJ3 Gen2.

Embraer Executive Jets reported its highest delivery numbers for seven years and a 12% increase over 2022. The Brazilian OEM delivered 115 bizjets in 2023, comprising 74 Phenoms and 41 Praetors. Embraer cited continued supply chain issues as the main reason for its performance falling just short of its original forecast of 120.

Dassault Aviation delivered just 26 Falcons in 2023, six fewer than in 2022 against a forecast of 35 units for the year. The French OEM had expected to report higher deliveries of its new Falcon 6X twin but, due to supply chain issues, the first delivery was delayed until three months after the aircraft had received its US and European certifications. Dassault said it was confident of stronger numbers in 2024.

## VistaJet at 20: strong growth in 2023

Thomas Flohr founded VistaJet in 2004. The Malta-based 'hours programme specialist' is now part of the wider Vista Global Group, which is headquartered in Dubai. Overall group performance last year was strong and Vista now holds 5% of the total market share in the private aviation sector. In 2023, on-fleet hours grew by some 17% to 200,000 hours with double-digit growth across all geographical regions. The Group operated just over 87,000 flights – an increase of 18% YoY and 80% greater than pre-pandemic levels.

### New Year, new traffic decline

Overall bizav traffic during the first five weeks of this year has continued the downward trend witnessed at the end of 2023, according to analysis of the data published by specialist WingX. But while the headline figures are clearly down, there are sectors within bizav traffic that demonstrate strength.

"The year has got off to a slow start compared to the beginning of 2023," said WingX managing director Richard Koe, "although it needs to be noted that the market was still seeing unprecedented peaks in activity 12 months ago. And there are still parts of the market seeing very strong activity, such as transatlantic, also US domestic fractional flying."

In North America, bizjet traffic fell by 4% from 1 January to 4 February compared to the same period in 2023, while all traffic (including turboprop) fell by 7%. More positively, there were just under 1,000 transatlantic flights during the period, an increase of 3%. In fact, transatlantic flights to the UK increased by some 26% YoY, while flights from North America to France grew by 22%.

In Europe, overall traffic numbers up to 4 February were 3% lower than the same period in 2023. Even the three busiest markets – France, the UK and Germany – all showed lower activity than in the previous year.

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## Bizjet in smaller numbers for this year's WEF

Over 3,500 participants, including 350 heads of state and government and ministers, gathered in the Swiss mountain resort of Davos-Klosters for the World Economic Forum's annual general meeting from 15 to 19 January. World leaders and business executives assembled to discuss the forum's four key themes, which covered a range from AI to job creation, security and climate change.

Prior to the event various FBOs were keen to point to the extended availability of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and advanced preparations for dropping passengers and relocation to other fields for the duration of the meeting. But to informed aircraft observers during WEF week, there were noticeably fewer arrivals, and the Zurich ramp did not boast row upon row of parked aircraft during the event.

While some participants may have used other entry points, including St. Gallen-Altenrhein, Friedrichshafen, Basel and Munich, it seems clear that the use of bizjets and government aircraft was much reduced. A study released by global climate group Greenpeace International before last year's meeting, showed that a sizable number of the jets used to fly in delegates in 2022 had flown less than 100 kilometres.

## Dublin proposes a ban on bizav

The Dublin Airport Authority (DAA), which operates the airport in the Irish capital, has joined other European airports in seeking to eliminate all bizav and general aviation flights. The aim of the ban would be to keep traffic levels in line with the current annual cap of 32 million passengers. The operator is seeking approval to increase the cap to 40 million, but this will take some years to achieve. The Irish Business & General Aviation Association has been working with other lobby groups, including the US NBAA, to emphasise the importance of bizav to the Irish economy.

## European SAF use to be boosted

As part of a major joint initiative to boost the use of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) in Europe, two major industry groups are seeking to raise usage levels above current legal requirements. The General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) and the European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) have published a joint report titled Sustainable Aviation Fuel Recommendations for Business Aviation across Europe, which details measures and strategies to encourage and assist aircraft operators to use SAF at a higher level. The overall emphasis is to ensure that bizav achieves its net-zero goal by 2050.

## Corporate aircraft news

Japanese OEM Honda Aircraft marked a major milestone by holding a celebration for the delivery of the 250th example of the iconic HondaJet at its facility at Greensboro, North Carolina. The HondaJet design is unique in featuring an over the wing engine mount (OTWEM), adding to the aircraft's aerodynamic efficiency.

Described by Honda as the "world's most advanced light jet", the HondaJet model has undergone several updates since the first delivery in 2015 to increase the aircraft's range, maximum cruise speed and altitude. Honda Aircraft President and CEO Hideto Yamasaki said: "The 250th delivery milestone is not just a number, but a narrative of our constant pursuit of excellence and innovation."

Piper Aircraft has unveiled its latest turboprop single. The M700 Fury is designed to replace the Piper M600SLS. While the new aircraft shares many features of the earlier model, including Garmin G3000 avionics with Autoland, it also features a five bladed Hartzell propeller and a more powerful P&WC PT6A-52 engine, which allows for improved performance during the climb and landing and take-off distance.

It is expected that the M700 will receive FAA certification next month with deliveries to US customers starting immediately after. Piper Aircraft President and CEO John Calcagno said: "The m700 Fury is a beautifully efficient, cross-country thoroughbred that gives our customers a performance-based flight experience with economics never seen before."



## AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

### Airbus ACJ TwoTwenty



#### CATEGORY

Heavy jet

#### MANUFACTURER

Airbus, multi-national

#### ENGINE

2 x Pratt & Whitney PW1500G turbofan

#### LENGTH

35.00 m

#### WINGSPAN

35.10 m

#### RANGE

10,460 km

#### MAX. SPEED

871kmh

#### SEATING CAPACITY

18

#### NO. OF CREW

2

#### MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

64,113 kg

#### DESCRIPTION

The A220 commercial airliner family was originally designed and produced by Canadian OEM Bombardier and entered the market as the CSeries. The programme was officially launched in July 2008, with the prototype CS100 making its first flight on 16 September 2013. The first CS100 entered airline service with Swiss in July 2016. In 2018 the aircraft was rebranded as the Airbus A220 after the European multinational acquired a 50.01% stake. Airbus Canada Limited Partnership (ACLP) increased the holding to 75% in 2020 when Bombardier exited the commercial airline market to focus on the production of corporate jets.

The A220-100 has, since 2020, been available in a corporate version. The ACJ TwoTwenty is fitted with up to five removable auxiliary centre fuel tanks that increase its range to 10,460km, compared to 6,390km for the A220-100. The first ACJ TwoTwenty was registered in Malta to executive specialist Comlux and is registered 9H-FIVE.