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EBACE 2016 - Excitement, enthusiasm & enduring value

EBACE (European Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition) returned to the Palexpo site adjacent to Geneva's airport from 24 to 26 May at a time when the continent's corporate aviation sector is once again grappling with both economic and political turbulence.

The opening session featured former French Foreign Minister and co-founder of Médecins Sans Frontières Bernard Kouchner, European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) Executive Director Patrick Ky and Channel IT Group CEO Bassim Haidar. A common theme from each of the keynote speakers was an emphasis on business aircraft being "an absolute necessity" rather than a luxury item. The continued development of the industry was absolutely crucial to their work.

This year's event, according to organisers, had the largest ever exhibition footprint and featured the usual talks, panels and educational sessions along with the opportunity to view the latest designs and technology. European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) CEO Fabio Gamba said: "This year's show was a terrific success, characterised by a full exhibit floor, with lots of business getting done; it's an affirmation that EBACE remains Europe's most important industry event."



The bare statistics were certainly impressive – 60 aircraft on static display, 450 exhibitors from 40 countries and 13,000 attendees. The static park saw all major manufacturers out in force. The Honda Aircraft Company marked the EASA certification of the HF120 HondaJet by displaying its first European-registered aircraft (M-HNDA). Boeing dominated the line-up with a 787-8BJ while rival Airbus, not to be outdone, announced the VVIP version of its A350-9 airliner with Easyfit outfitting. Gulfstream also made headlines by flying both the G450 and G550 to Geneva from its Savannah, Georgia, headquarters using renewable (i.e. bio) fuels.

Swiss manufacturer Pilatus briefly displayed its groundbreaking PC24 twinjet, which was taking a break from intensive pre-certification testing. Also making its EBACE debut was Dassault's new flagship Falcon 8X due for imminent certification and entry into service later this year. Bombardier displayed a full cabin mock-up of the new Global 7000, while confirming that US fractional specialist Flexjet was the customer behind an order for 20 Challenger 350s announced in April.

Vistajet's 100th aircraft

Programme and charter specialist VIP operator VistaJet marked the delivery, on 12 May, of its hundredth aircraft since its launch in 2004 as Air Executive with a single Learjet 60. The carrier's fleet of Bombardier aircraft have since become a common sight at airports around the world. Its current fleet consists of 60 aircraft, with 54 of them registered in Malta, alongside the US and China. The company's charismatic chairman and founder Thomas Flohr said: "This is a huge milestone for VistaJet. We are very proud to be welcoming the hundredth aircraft to our fleet today. Thanks to the investment we have made since 2004, we have over 60 of the latest, most efficient aircraft in the market, and a regular service area of more than 90% of the globe."

China airspace restrictions to ease

A meeting of the State Council of The People's Republic of China held on 4 May could have huge implications for general aviation in China. The meeting, presided over by Premier Li Keqiang, announced proposals to ease the restrictions long seen as a barrier to encouraging private flying in a country where the military controls large parts of the airspace. The observation altitude, below which pilots are not required to file a flight plan, is to be raised from 1,000m to 3,000m. In addition, there are plans to reduce the length of time it takes to process a flight plan from days to a matter of hours. The Council also called for the construction of 300 new general aviation airports by 2020 and making the process of applying for an AOC easier.

Flexjet acquires European AOC

US fractional specialist and charter operator Flexjet has confirmed that it is to set up a European operation having announced plans to acquire an AOC. The new operation is scheduled to launch by the end of this year from four bases, including London and Paris, using a fleet of eight Nextant 400XTi twinjets. One major aspect of the plan is for the European based aircraft to serve passengers arriving on Transatlantic Flexjet flights. The new operation will be headed up by Raymond Jones, formerly Senior Vice President – Sales for Bombardier.

RANA SERVICE CENTRE: Aviation insurance

Sovereign Insurance Services (SIS) is a fully licensed, independent general insurance intermediary based in Gibraltar with direct links to specialist underwriters based in London and elsewhere. SIS can offer wide-ranging bespoke insurance cover for owners of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters. The strength of the Sovereign brand combined with the expertise and experience of the SIS team has enabled it to build relationships with leading insurers throughout the world. The team offers market insight and expertise, competitive pricing, together with efficient and professional claims handling.

Specialist aviation insurance covers the full range from public liability through to hull insurance for new or used airframes. The SIS team can quote on all types of aviation asset – from corporate jets and turboprops, general aviation aircraft and helicopters to FBOs, flying schools or commercial passenger or freight operators. SIS also specialises in areas such as kidnap and ransom insurance, which may be of interest to aircraft owners and operators.

2-REG making headlines

Dominating the static display at this year's EBACE in Geneva was a Boeing 787-8BJ. The aircraft had been delivered for cabin outfitting in January 2014 and joins two other examples operated by the government flights of the UAE and Mexico in service worldwide. In a major headline grab during the show it was announced that the aircraft, currently on the US register as N28MS is to be re-registered on the Channel Island of Guernsey. Branded as 2-REG, the island's aircraft registry has recently gained permission to allow commercial operations and the granting of Air Operator Certificates (AOCs). The VVIP 40-seat 787 is to be made available for charter by its new owner – China's Deer Jet. Its Hong Kong subsidiary Hongkong Jet is applying for a Guernsey AOC.

In a further announcement in Geneva, Volare Aviation (Guernsey), subsidiary of Oxford-based management and sales specialist Volare Aviation has been granted the first Guernsey AOC. Two Challenger 601 aircraft have been transferred to the Guernsey register (as 2-MATO and 2-SEXY). Volare is headed up by Dustin Dryden who previously set up UK operator Hangar8.

London Executive Aviation rebrands

London Executive Aviation (LEA), currently the UK's largest corporate charter operator, is to be rebranded as Luxaviation UK. The move follows the acquisition of 70% of the company by Luxembourg-based Luxaviation in 2014. Headquartered at Stapleford in Essex, the company currently operates a mixed fleet of 24 jet and turboprop aircraft from the Legacy 650 down to the Phenom 300 and King Air 200.

NetJets Europe links with London Heliport

The London Heliport in Battersea, the only heliport in the capital currently certified by the UK Civil Aviation Authority, is to be rebranded as The NetJets London Heliport. The move follows an investment from fractional specialist NetJets Europe, which sees the heliport as a key link between the city and airports around the capital served by its jet aircraft. The heliport handled 10,500 movements last year and recently celebrated the 500,000th movement since its opening in 1957. In addition to the renaming, the building and landing area will feature extensive branding for NetJets Europe and its sister company, Executive Jet Management Europe.

Corporate aircraft news

US manufacturer Cirrus Aircraft confirmed, on 5 May, that the first production version of its Vision SF50 single engine jet had been completed at its facility in Duluth, Minnesota. The Vision is being marketed as "a whole new category of aircraft – The Personal Jet", a single pilot very light jet seating up six passengers. The aircraft is designed using all composite materials and is expected to receive FAA certification later this month. It is understood that the manufacturer holds more than 600 orders for the new design.

Although no stranger to setting city pair speed records, Gulfstream's flagship G650ER recently set a new standard by flying from Sydney, Australia, to Los Angeles in 12 hours and 40 minutes. The aircraft covered the 6,620nm (12,260km) at an average speed of Mach 0.86. In another industry update, the Savannah-based manufacturer expects its new G600 to fly before the end of 2016.

Brazil's Embraer Legacy 500 has now received approval to operate into London City Airport (LCY). In a major landmark for the new generation Legacy 450 and 500 projects, the company officially opened a new, enlarged production facility in the US. The Melbourne, Florida, facility will now build the Phenom 100 and 300 as well as the smaller Legacies.

In an announcement at EBACE, Textron Aircraft confirmed that it has completed the first mating of wings to fuselage on the prototype Cessna Citation Longitude. The super mid-size twinjet was announced at EBACE in 2012. First flight is expected during Q3 this year. The company also celebrated a major landmark on 29 April – the 25th anniversary of the first flight of the Cessna 525 CitationJet. Close to 2,000 examples of the twinjet have been delivered to customers around the globe.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \ \

Embraer Legacy 500



CATEGORY

Mid-size jet

MANUFACTURER

Embraer, Brazil

ENGINE

2x Honeywell HTF7500E turbopfans

LENGTH

20.74 m

WINGSPAN

20.25 m

RANGE

5,788 km

MAX. SPEED

863 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

12

NO. OF CREW

2

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

17,400 kg

DESCRIPTION

Brazilian manufacturer Embraer first displayed cabin mock-ups of two new jet concepts at the NBAA in 2007. The designs were officially launched six months later and branded Legacy 450 and 500 at EBAA in 2008. Development of the larger Legacy 500 was beset with software problems and the aircraft was rolled out in December 2011 with the first flight occurring almost a year later in November 2012. Brazilian certification was received in August 2014 with the FAA following suit two months later.

The Legacy 500 is designed to compete with the Cessna Citation Sovereign and Citation X among others and to fit between the Phenom 300 and Legacy 600. The aircraft offers full fly-by-wire controls, fully glass cockpit along with two rear-mounted Honeywell turbopfans providing excellent fuel efficiency. The Honeywell HTF7500E also power the Gulfstream G280, Bombardier Challengers 300 and 350 and its smaller sibling the Legacy 450.