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Bizjet traffic comes up Trumps for Davos

The 2018 annual general meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in the Swiss mountain resort of Davos was the first to be attended by a sitting President of the USA since Bill Clinton hit the slopes in 2000. The appearance of 'anti-globalist' Donald Trump was much more of a surprise – his former strategist Steve Bannon, after all, once used the phrase "the party of Davos" as a byword for his enemies.

Perhaps in deference to 'The Donald', the weather in Zurich – the closest hub to Davos -- remained unseasonably warm, providing respite to the hundreds of photographers and the curious who turned out to see the arrival of 'Air Force One' on 25 January.

The WEF always provides a boost to business aviation and this year was no exception. An estimated additional 1,000 corporate jet flights were once again handled by Zurich and other convenient locations including Dübendorf, Friedrichshafen, Samedan/St. Moritz and Altenrhein.

Brian T Richards, director of Sovereign's aviation division and veteran monitor of WEF traffic noted: "The dominance of large cabin aircraft, particularly the Global Express, Gulfstream G550 and G650 and Falcon 7X, remained as pronounced as ever. This year however, traffic at Zurich seemed busier than previous years with a notable increase in aircraft from charter/programme specialists including VistaJet and Luxaviation."

VistaJet reports strongest year yet

2017 was a record year for Malta-based programme and charter specialist VistaJet, which flew over 50,000 passengers in one year for the first time. Flight hours were up markedly year-on-year, with double digit growth in flight hours in both the US and Asia. It also made significant progress on its core strategic priorities, increasing market share across the globe. Europe remains the firm's largest market, accounting for 41% of the total hours flown worldwide. The number of new Programme customers in the Middle East grew by 50% year-on-year.

IS-BAH signs up 100th registration

The International Business Aviation Council (IBAC) launched a voluntary audit-based programme of industry standard best practice for handlers and fixed base operators (FBOs) around the world in 2014. The International Standard for Business Aircraft Handling (IS-BAH) has now reached the significant milestone with the 100th location to join the programme.

Jersey aims to transform ailing registry

The Jersey Aircraft Registry (JAR) has struggled since its launch in 2015, following the much-publicised failure of negotiations for a joint registry with its Channel Island neighbour Guernsey. JAR currently boasts just one aircraft – a Cessna CitationJet CJ4 ZJ-THC – and has faced widespread criticism in Jersey over the substantial costs incurred in developing and setting it up. In a recent statement to the island's parliament, Economic Development Minister Senator Lyndon Farnham said: "I believe we are close to announcing a solution which will enable the registry to further grow and develop in the years ahead". He went on to note: "Whether we like it or not this money has been invested in the aircraft registry and my department is determined to ensure that there is a long-term future for the aircraft registry, and that is what we are aiming to achieve."

EBAA urges to keep business aviation status quo

With the clock on Brexit negotiations ticking, the European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) has entered the fray by encouraging the UK and European Union negotiating teams to maintain the status quo. In a recently published analysis report, it urged both parties to maintain the current aviation market and rules as far as possible following Brexit.

The report assesses the current relationship and sets out six possible scenarios for the aviation sector after Brexit. It further highlights a number of areas of concern to corporate aviation, including the UK's relationship with the regulator EASA, VAT and the Customs Union, and the traffic rights for free circulation within the remaining 27 member countries.

Brandon Mitchener, CEO of EBAA, said: "As Brexit moves into its second phase, this report is a helpful reminder of the expectations of the European business aviation industry from the Brexit negotiations. As a sector that contributes significantly to both the EU and UK economies through the people who power them, it is paramount that these negotiations result in a strong relationship between the EU and UK."

According to the report, 374,000 European jobs "are either directly or indirectly dependent on the European business aviation sector".

AVIATION SERVICES HUB:

Aircraft insurance

Sovereign Insurance Services (SIS) is a fully licensed, independent general insurance intermediary, based in Gibraltar. 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. With direct links to specialist underwriters based in London and elsewhere, SIS can provide wide-ranging bespoke insurance cover for owners of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters. The team further offers market insight, expertise and 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 will 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.

2017 - manufacturer reports

Four of the five major corporate jet manufacturers have released their delivery figures for 2017, with Bombardier poised to announce its numbers as this issue of Airborne is published.

Dassault Aviation: In the wake of the recent cancellation of the Falcon 5X programme, Dassault's figures surpassed its predictions. The French firm received orders for 41 Falcons in 2017 (with three 5X cancellations) compared to a net total of 21 in 2016 (33 orders, 12 cancellations). Additionally, the company delivered 49 aircraft, four better than its target of 45 for the year and the same as 2016.

Embraer: The Brazilian manufacturer delivered a total of 109 aircraft in 2017 – a fall of eight aircraft over 2016. Performance was however in line with its projections. The company handed over 72 light jets (18 Phenom 100, 54 Phenom 400), along with 37 large cabin jets (14 Legacy 450, 15 Legacy 500, seven Legacy 650 and one Lineage).

Gulfstream Aerospace: The US manufacturer's headline delivery total for 2017 was 121, comprising 94 large cabin and 27 mid-size aircraft. This compares favourably with 115 in 2016 (88 and 27 respectively) although a little below initial predictions. Orders for the flagship G650/G650ER increased by some 78% YOY in Q4. The manufacturer is also looking forward to the start of G500 and G600 deliveries during 2018.

Textron Aviation: The Wichita-based manufacturer delivered a total of 180 Cessna Citations in 2017 – an increase of six units over the previous year. In contrast it handed over just 86 King Airs, a fall of 20 over 2016. Additionally, the company's revenues and profits fell last year – revenues declined from \$4.921 billion in 2016 to \$4.686 billion, while profits fell from \$389 million to \$303 million.

Corporate aircraft news

Swiss manufacturer Pilatus handed over the first PC-24 twin 'Super Versatile Jet' on 7 February to launch customer PlaneSense, the US fractional specialist. The aircraft, registered N124AF, is the first of six examples to join the operator and will combine with a total of 36 Pilatus PC-12 turboprop singles currently in service. One of the PC-24's principal selling points is its ability to use remote fields that are unable to be served by other corporate jets, along with its short field performance and cargo door.

Savannah-based Gulfstream Aerospace delivered the last Gulfstream G450 to roll off the production line on 19 January. The aircraft is to be replaced by the fly-by-wire G500, which is scheduled to receive certification and enter service by the end of Q1 this year. The G450 first entered service in 2005 and a total of 355 remain active worldwide. The G450 was itself a development of the original Gulfstream GIV, which received FAA certification in April 1987.

In anticipation of forthcoming certification, a full prototype G500 has started a world tour for demonstration to existing and potential customers. The tour, which will take in some 12 countries and last until June, will include stops in New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Milan, Moscow and Beijing among others. The aircraft (registered N505GD) also joined its larger sistership, the G600, on display at the Singapore Air Show in early February.

Remanufacture specialist Nextant Aerospace confirmed, on 6 February, that it had received a complete set of approvals from the FAA for the G90XT twin turboprop. The latest certification covers the power control system by single lever and joins approvals already granted for the Garmin G1000 avionics and GE H75 engines for the reworked Beech King Air C90A. The firm expects to receive EASA certification within the next four months.

Recognising a predicted domestic demand for up to 30 supersonic business jets (SSBJ), Russian President Vladimir Putin recently suggested that it might develop an aircraft using the base of the Tupolev TU-160M2 strategic swing-wing bomber. Subsequently, the head of Russian aerospace and defence firm United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) confirmed that work on the project has started. It will use elements of the TU-160M2 currently under development. The Russian government holds a majority stake in UAC.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

Cessna Citation Latitude



CATEGORY

Mid-size jet

MANUFACTURER

Textron Aviation, USA

ENGINE

2 x P&WC PW306D1 turboprops

LENGTH

18.97 m

WINGSPAN

22.05 m

RANGE

5,278 km

MAX. SPEED

826 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

9

NO. OF CREW

2

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

13,971 kg

DESCRIPTION

According to the Citation Latitude's manufacturer, Textron, the aircraft offers "comfort and efficiency perfected" as "the first bizjet to combine a wide, flat floor, stand-up cabin with a mid-size price". US fractional specialist NetJets has obviously taken these words to heart because it has ordered up to 150 of the mid-size aircraft. The Latitude is based on the Cessna Citation 680 Sovereign and is officially designated as the Citation 680A.

The Latitude was officially announced by the manufacturer in October 2011 at the NBAA annual convention. Although based on the Citation 680 Sovereign, the aircraft was designed to act as a cheaper alternative and as a larger step up from the Citation Excel XLS+. A prototype of the new design made its first flight on 18 February 2014 and the aircraft received FAA certification on 8 June of the following year. According to current data, a total of 128 examples have been delivered to customers in 11 countries with the vast bulk being operated in the US.