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First half 2019 - mixed fortunes for manufacturers

The headline from Savannah is impressive. In the first six months of 2019, Gulfstream Aerospace delivered 25% more bizjets than the year before – 50 units, up from 37 in H1 2018. Additionally, H1 revenues from the General Dynamics aerospace division – including both Gulfstream and Jet Aviation – increased by 17.3% to \$4.332 billion, although earnings fell slightly by \$73 million.

As this issue of Airborne is written, Gulfstream has confirmed the first delivery of its new G600, following receipt of both type and production certificates from the FAA on 28 June. The first delivery of another large cabin aircraft marque is significant. The 25% increase in shipments over H1 2018 was due entirely to large cabin models – midsize deliveries remained unchanged at 15 units. The H1 performance of other MROs paints a less rosy picture.

The fortunes of Wichita-based Textron Aviation went in the opposite direction. The manufacturer of Cessna and Beechcraft aircraft delivered a total of 80 aircraft – 46 jets and 34 turboprops – in H1, compared to 96 in the same period last year. Revenues fell 15% (\$153 million) to \$1.1 billion. CEO Scott Donnelly noted in the investor call that the fall in deliveries (and orders) during the period had been due to US economic uncertainty and the possibility of tariffs with Mexico. The company has also ceased development of the large cabin Citation Hemisphere, but it expects certification of the super-midsize Citation Longitude by the end of Q3.

Embraer Executive Jets delivered 36 aircraft in the first six months of this year – up from 31 in the same period last year. This figure comprised 27 light jets (six Phenom 100 and 21 Phenom 300) along with nine larger aircraft – five Legacy 500, two Legacy 650, one Legacy 450 and one Praetor 600. At the end of June, the Brazilian manufacturer also reported an order backlog worth some \$16.9 billion, an increase of \$900,000 in Q2.

Canadian manufacturer Bombardier Business Aircraft delivered a total of 59 units in H1 – a fall of six over the same six months last year. Revenues also rose by 6% YOY to \$1.38 billion, although earnings slid by 22% to \$84 million. On a more positive note, the company's order backlog now stands at \$15.3 billion, up by \$1 billion in the last three months. Both the Global 5500 and Global 6500 are due for certification and service entry by the end of this year.

G650ER sets polar circumnavigation record

In a fitting tribute to mark 50 years since the first moon landing, a Qatar Executive Gulfstream G650ER has set a new record for a circumnavigation of the earth via the two poles by an aircraft. The G650ER completed the 40,172km (21,691nm) route in 46 hours, 39 minutes and 38 seconds. The flight departed from the Kennedy Space Centre at 9.32am on 9 July (the same time and place as Apollo 11 was launched in 1969). The aircraft made three stops – Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana) in Kazakhstan, Mauritius and Punta Arenas in Chile. The record-breaking flight beat the previous tally – set in 2008 by a Global Express – by five hours, 51 minutes and 26 seconds. This flight had departed from Farnborough, UK and had made technical stops at Whitehorse, Canada, Majuro, Marshall Islands, Christchurch, New Zealand, Punta Arenas and Sal in Cabo Verde. This attempt itself shaved 95 minutes off the previous record set by a Pan Am Boeing 747SP in 1977.

US bizav traffic dips YOY

According to the latest data published by aircraft activity analyst Argus in its TRAQPak report, bizav activity fell by 0.5% YOY in June. The analysis, which covered North America and the Caribbean, recorded overall falls for all categories of aircraft with the exception of midsize jets, where traffic rose by some 1.3% YOY. Large jet traffic fell by 2%, light jets by 1.9% and turboprops by 0.6%. When looking at type of operation, both Part 91 (non-commercial) operations and Part 135 (commercial) operations recorded falls in June – by 1.2% and 1.6% respectively. On a more positive note, overall operations increased by 0.3% in the first six months of the year despite recent falls.

European bizav traffic also falls

This side of the Atlantic, bizav traffic has also declined YOY over 2018. According to the latest data from specialist analyst WINGX Advance, overall traffic in July (at 90,550 flights) was down by 2.5% compared to 2018. Year to date traffic has fallen by 1.8% over the first seven months of the year. However, the July total was the highest recorded tally for this month since 2006. As with June, the main reason for the decline was significant falls in traffic in both Germany and the UK – both down by some 6% YOY. WINGX managing director Richard Koe said the figures “clearly...reflect the gloomier macroeconomic picture, with Germany's economic slowdown and the UK's Brexit chaos reflected in significant declines in flight activity from both countries.”

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Citation Hemisphere 'on hold'

On 17 July, Textron Aviation announced that it was halting development of its large-cabin Hemisphere twin jet. Textron Inc. CEO Scott Donnelly confirmed during the Q2 investor call that the project was now "on hold" owing to continued uncertainty over the new Safran Silvercrest engine that was due to power the aircraft. The contract between Textron and Safran has now been cancelled with no financial penalty on either side. Development issues with the Silvercrest were also responsible for Dassault's cancellation of its Falcon 5X project in 2017. The Hemisphere was originally announced in late 2015 and development was suspended in July 2018. That status has now been formalised.

Tamarack installing winglets again

Tamarack Aerospace has begun installing its 'Atlas' active winglets to CitationJet Models CJ1, CJ2 and CJ3 (525, 525A and 525B) following the lifting of emergency airworthiness directives by both the FAA and EASA. The original FAA directive issued on 24 May followed an order from EASA in April that effectively grounded all aircraft equipped with the Tamarack winglets (76 aircraft in the US). As a result of the grounding, Tamarack filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on 7 June.

BACA now The Charter Association

The world's leading trade association for entities and individuals within the air charter sector was founded in 1949 as the Baltic Air Charter Association (BACA) at the Baltic Exchange in the City of London. To mark its 70th anniversary at the beginning of July, BACA unveiled a major rebrand under which it will now be known as the Air Charter Association (ACA). According to its website, ACA's goal is to "raise and promote the highest standards of conduct and professionalism in the aviation market. We support our members with guidance on compliance and best practice, offer bespoke training days and business networking, and work closely with aviation regulators and government bodies on key industry issues."

Corporate aircraft news

Canadian manufacturer Bombardier marked a significant landmark on 11 July when it announced delivery of the 300th super mid-size twin Challenger 350. The reworking of the popular Challenger 300 was first announced at EBACE in May 2013 and the aircraft received FAA certification just over a year later. Peter Likoray, SVP worldwide sales and marketing for Bombardier Business Aircraft, said: "The delivery of the 300th Challenger 350 business jet in only five years after its entry-into-service represents another exciting milestone for Bombardier and underscores the trust our customers place in this industry-leading aircraft."

In a recent project update, Dassault Aviation confirmed that it was on schedule to complete assembly of the first Falcon 6X super mid-size twin in Q1 of 2020. The 6X is to be powered by the new Pratt & Whitney Canada PW812D engine. The aircraft is scheduled to make its first flight in 2021 with certification and first deliveries slated for 2022.

Qatar Executive, the corporate jet charter subsidiary of Qatar Airways, confirmed a previously unassigned order for an additional 18 Gulfstream aircraft valued at just over \$1 billion. President Trump and the Emir of Qatar announced the order during the latter's visit to Washington. The order comprises 14 G650ERs and four smaller G500s. The new aircraft will join an existing fleet of six G650ERs and four G500s.

In response to a service bulletin from Rolls Royce, Gulfstream has instructed all operators of older G650ER aircraft to inspect and lubricate the high-pressure compressor viable stator vane mechanism on their aircraft. The affected aircraft are more than two-years-old (construction numbers 6001 to 6254). The service bulletin was issued in response to two inflight engine shutdowns that occurred in the last 12 months.

According to the latest data published by flight tracker FlightAware, a total of 77% of US-registered turbine-powered business aircraft are now equipped with ADS-B in advance of the FAA mandatory deadline of 1 January 2020. In bare figures, this represents 13,352 aircraft of the total fleet of 17,319 craft.

On 5 August, Japanese manufacturer Honda Aircraft confirmed that its iconic HondaJet Elite had received type certification from the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC).



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Reims-Cessna F406 Caravan II



CATEGORY

Turboprop

MANUFACTURER

Reims Aviation, France/USA

ENGINE

2 x P&WC PT6A-112 turboprops

LENGTH

11.89 m

WINGSPAN

15.09 m

RANGE

2,135 km

MAX. SPEED

424 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

12

NO. OF CREW

1

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

4,246 kg

DESCRIPTION

A total of 99 F406 Caravan II were produced between 1983 and 2013. The aircraft was manufactured and designed by France's Reims Aviation, working in close collaboration with US giant Cessna. The prototype made its first flight in September 1983 and the first production unit taking to the skies in April 1985. When Reims Aviation ceased trading in 2013, Continental Motors Inc. and ASI Innovation purchased rights to the F406 with hopes to restart production in due course.

The F406 Caravan II is a development of the Cessna 404. The aircraft is a non-pressurised twin turboprop that was designed to fulfil a number of roles including light utility, passenger and cargo transport and military reconnaissance. An executive/VIP version can seat up six passengers. In addition, the Surmar is a specialist maritime surveillance version, while the Polmar is specially modified to deal with marine pollution. The standard F406 Caravan II can also be equipped with a 1.3m³ belly pod that can carry up to 320kg of general freight.