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Middle East market in the spotlight - MEBAA 2016

It has long been accepted that the corporate jet market in the Middle East relies on large cabin aircraft, so it was no surprise that each of the major manufacturers brought their latest offerings to Dubai for the biennial Middle East and North Africa Business Aviation Association (MEBAA) show and heavily promoted those designs that are slated to receive certification before the next event in 2018.

This year's MEBAA show was held at its now familiar home at Dubai Al Maktoum International Airport (DWC) from 6-8 December. Officially opened by Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, president of Dubai Civil Aviation Authority and chairman and CEO of Emirates airline and Group, it featured some 460 exhibitors and hosted 9,000 visitors – an increase of nearly 10% on the 2014 event. As a crucial adjunct to the show, the MEBAA Dubai conference took place on 5 December and featured a large number of industry experts, regulators and lawyers.

This year's static display featured some 50 aircraft in the static display with a couple of designs – the Dassault Falcon 8X and HondaJet making their show debuts. Gulfstream brought its flagship G650ER while Bombardier was also promoting its new Global 8000, which was absent but made its first flight at the beginning of November. The Boeing BBJ Max 7, offering a range of 12,965km was unveiled in early November and the first order for the new marque was announced on the first day of the show.

JetSmarter launches Dubai-London shuttle

JetSmarter, the groundbreaking US-based online membership marketplace, launched its new "JetShuttle" scheduled service between Dubai and London on 8 December as MEBAA 2016 came to a close. Open to the programme's 6,000-plus members, the weekly flight will operate with a 13-seat Embraer Legacy 650. The aircraft will depart Dubai Al Maktoum International (DWC) for London Luton on Thursdays at 20:30 local time, returning the following day at 12:00 local time. The journey will be seven to eight hours in duration and, the company claims, using the two smaller airports will allow a faster boarding and arrival process.

The Legacy will be operated by Empire Aviation and Vertis Aviation. JetSmarter's CEO and founder Sergey Petrossov said: "We have a large membership in Dubai. Due to the high demand, we are expanding our intercontinental JetShuttle service which will now connect three major continents – North America, Europe and Asia."

Africa focus - AfBAA annual meeting

The annual conference of the African Business Aviation Association (AfBAA) – held in Cape Town on 17 and 18 November – attracted over 160 delegates representing some 60 international and African companies. Leaders of the association stressed the need to engage local regulators country-by-country to support the growth of business aviation, which they believe has huge potential on the continent. Founding chairman Tarek Ragheb said the AfBAA could not be NBAA. "We have a unique environment with unique challenges," he said, not least of which was having 54 countries and no single regulatory environment. The way forward, he suggested, was "innovation." Ragheb said that the other great hope was technology. He pointed to infrastructure challenges on the continent and the need to embrace new business models such as JetSmarter.

WINGX - the November numbers

The bottom line figure YOY for European business traffic is still down by 0.2% over 2015. The latest summary produced by specialist analyst WINGX Advance did however show that November's total was slightly up on the same month last year. There were 58,111 departures and the overall number of business jet flights increased by some 3% over November 2015. The main reason for this increase was continuing strength in numbers of movements in Western Europe with France, the UK and Italy showing healthy gains. The bulk of the increase in business jet flights can be attributed to a substantial uplift in VJL traffic. In comparison, turboprop and piston aircraft activity was significantly down and therefore responsible for the continued slight fall YOY.

New restrictions at St Tropez

The French authorities have removed customs and immigration facilities from 13 small airports. The surprise move has already heavily impacted St Tropez La Mole airport, which caters for many high net worth property owners and visitors to the Cote d'Azur. Under the new rules, flights from outside the Schengen common travel area will be unable to land in St Tropez, necessitating helicopter transfers from airports such as Cannes and Toulon that retain customs facilities. It is understood that 30% of traffic into St Tropez originated in the UK, Russia and the Middle East before the restrictions were introduced.

RANA SERVICE CENTRE: Corporate ownership

Leveraging the Sovereign Group's wealth of experience in the provision of corporate services, RANA offers ownership solutions that are tailored specifically to aviation assets. We can recommend appropriate jurisdictions and corporate structures to provide asset protection, including tax and succession planning, as well as advising on the requirements and restrictions of particular registries. The carefully planned use of a company structure – or special purpose vehicle (SPV) – can provide a number of distinct advantages to the owner of private aircraft or other types of aviation asset. Access to corporate limited liability and enhanced levels of confidentiality are the most obvious, but a company structure can also provide significant potential benefits in respect of estate planning, as well as simplifying any future sale of the asset, resulting in savings of time and cost. Sovereign will establish structures in jurisdictions worldwide that are best suited to the owner's place of residence or domicile, and the aircraft's registration and intended usage.

A blissful change of strategy

Back in July we reported on plans by US operator Bliss Jet to launch scheduled flights from White Plains, New York to London Biggin Hill. That strategy has changed. The company will launch a new service on shared Gulfstream G450 or G550 between the Marine Air Terminal at New York LaGuardia Airport and London Stansted from 8 January. Flights will depart New York on Sunday evening and return from London on Friday afternoon. The aircraft will be operated on the Part 135 certificate of White Cloud Charter with seats selling for \$11,995 one-way. It is understood that the change in terminals in both New York and London was as a result of customer feedback in advance of service launch.

New Signature FBO at Luton

At the beginning of December, Signature Flight Support celebrated the completion of its £26 million investment in a new FBO facility at London Luton airport with a Great Gatsby-themed gala charity event. The centrepiece is a new 4,500m² hangar along with 7,000m² ramp space. Signature's terminal covers some 1,572m². Maria Sastre, Signature's president and COO, said: "This stunning facility has been many years in the making. We are delighted to officially open the new Signature Luton facility, which is ready to welcome customers from around the world. Our relationship with London Luton Airport is exemplary and their support of this project was essential to its success."

Air Force 1 trumped?

"Boeing is building a brand new 747 Air Force One for future presidents, but costs are out of control, more than \$4 billion. Cancel order!" US President-elect Donald Trump's tweet on 6 December caused Boeing's share price to fall by 2.5 cents. Earlier this year the manufacturer signed a \$170 million contract to design a replacement for the two current and ageing 747-200 aircraft which serve as "Air Force One" when the President is aboard. While there are many questions raised by Trump's figures, it is clear that his prolific use of Twitter will continue to provide insight into his views and policy decisions.

Corporate aircraft news

Described as an "owner flown aircraft", the Stratos 714 very light personal jet was first announced in 2008 by Stratos Aircraft based in Redmond, Oregon. The aircraft, which can carry four passengers, finally completed its first flight on 21 November. According to the manufacturer's website: "Flying high above the weather at FL 410, the Stratos 714 can traverse the United States from Miami to Seattle in seven hours flight time against 50 knot headwinds, with a single stop and a full payload. Until now, no personal aircraft could accomplish this feat." At this stage, the Stratos is not accepting orders or deposits for the aircraft but this will no doubt change as the flight test programme gears up and the aircraft moves towards certification.

In a recent press conference at the company's plant in Greensboro, North Carolina, president and CEO of Honda Aircraft Michimasa Fujino confirmed that production of the HondaJet stands at 36 per month. This is due to reach 80 units per month by March 2019.

Textron Aviation announced that a second Cessna Citation Longitude has entered the flight test programme. It is understood that the aircraft made its first flight on 19 November from the company's facility at Beech Field in Wichita, Kansas. FAA certification of the Longitude is expected by the close of 2017.

Bombardier's flagship Global 7000 first flew on 4 November. On 21 November, the flight test vehicle was transferred from Toronto to the company's plant in Wichita where it will begin the flight test programme. It is understood that the "FTV1" will be joined by four other examples as testing accelerates in anticipation of certification in early 2018.

The team at RegisterAnAircraft and the Sovereign Group would like to send all readers of 'Airborne' season's greetings and our best wishes for 2017

REGISTER AN AIRCRAFT



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

Dassault Falcon 20



CATEGORY

Mid-size jet

MANUFACTURER

Dassault Aviation, France

ENGINE

2x General Electric CF700-2D-2 turbofans

LENGTH

17.15 m

WINGSPAN

16.30 m

RANGE

3,350 km

MAX. SPEED

862 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

14

NO. OF CREW

2

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

13,000 kg

DESCRIPTION

Dassault's Falcon 20 was one of the original iconic corporate jets. The project, which was under development during the late 1950s, received the go ahead in December 1961. The prototype first flew on 4 May 1963 from the French manufacturer's facility at Bordeaux-Mérignac with two rear-mounted Pratt & Whitney JT12A-8 engines. Following the first flight and as a result of an agreement with Pan American to re-market the aircraft, the prototype was re-engined with two General Electric CF700 engines and this version received certification from the FAA in June 1965.

Originally called the Dassault-Breguet Mystère 20, the aircraft was also known as the Fan Jet Falcon before finally being marketed as the Falcon 20. A version with improved performance and new powerplant was launched as the Falcon 200 but achieved limited success. A total of 473 Falcon 20s and 35 Falcon 200s had been produced by the time the programme ended in 1988.