

AIRBORNE

December 2022

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Fuelling bizav in the Middle East - MEBAA returns

In 2018, when the last Middle East & North Africa Business Aviation (MEBAA) show was held, the world was a very different place. MEBAA 2022, which took place in Dubai from 6 to 8 December, opened against a backdrop of environmental protests against business aviation across Europe and recent calls by a French government minister for restrictions on bizav.

Ali Alnaqbi, MEBAA founder and executive chairman, made it clear in his opening remarks that Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) would be a key issue for attendees. For a region reliant on the production of hydrocarbon fuels and on sustaining high worldwide prices, this a challenging issue and one that is likely to 'rock a number of boats.' "It is very expensive to use SAF at the moment because demand is not that high. The hope is to significantly expand the volume of production. However, we are going in the right direction," said Alnaqbi. "It's a hot topic, so hopefully, in the next couple of years, we'll see a lot more deliverables than just talking. SAF could happen tomorrow. The way things happen in the UAE, it could just happen tomorrow."

This year's MEBAA event, the ninth in the event's history, attracted just shy of 10,000 visitors and 118 exhibitors. The static display featuring 16 aircraft, including the Falcon 8X and Gulfstream G700.

Bizav facilities targeted by protesters

Business aviation operations faced disruptive protests by environmental campaigners in multiple locations across Europe last month in a coordinated action to coincide with the start of the COP27 climate change conference in Egypt. Private terminals and FBOs in the UK, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands were targeted by groups including Extinction Rebellion, Scientist Rebellion, and Last Generation. The protests were aimed at highlighting the impact of bizav on carbon emissions.

In the UK, demonstrators gathered at the entrance to Farnborough Airport and outside Harrods Aviation FBO at Luton. In a far more dangerous and disruptive escalation, protestors gained access to the ramp at Schiphol Ost in Amsterdam and blocked aircraft from being moved. It is understood that at least one aircraft was damaged and a further flight had to be diverted.

A week later similar demonstrations took place at various locations in the US. The focus was on airfields with high levels of bizav traffic, such as at New York City-area Teterboro Airport and Van Nuys Airport in Los Angeles, and on FBOs such as Wilson Air Center at Charlotte/Douglas International Airport and Signature Aviation at King County International Airport/Boeing Field in Seattle.

Sustainable Aviation Fuel market to grow

The market for Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) will be worth USD60 billion by 2030, according to a recent report by specialist analyst Market Research Future. As the aviation industry – both commercial and private – seeks to reduce carbon emissions by shifting away from petroleum-based fuels, it is moving to embrace and facilitate the use of liquid biofuels. The report also offers an insight into the challenges facing the sector as it moves away from carbon fuels, including a shortage of raw materials and the lack of supply chain infrastructure for SAF manufacturers.

A world of two halves - bizav traffic ups and downs

Bizav traffic levels for November were down by 2% over the same month in 2021, according to the latest data produced by specialist tracking analyst WINGX, but this figure still remains 13% above the pre-pandemic level in November 2019.

The world can safely be split into two distinct parts – with Europe and North America on one side and the 'Rest of the World' on the other. In the former, bizav traffic is noticeably falling. November 2022 saw European traffic levels 15% lower than 2021 – the fourth month in a row in which traffic levels were lower than the previous year – as the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and economic uncertainty continues to take its toll. Some countries, most notably Germany, are now seeing levels lower than 2019. North American bizav traffic also fell, although by a smaller margin – down 3% over November 2021. Again, November was the third consecutive month to see falls over the previous year.

Traffic numbers in the rest of the world are far more encouraging. Overall bizjet flight levels are up by 22% over 2021 and an impressive 61% over pre-pandemic levels. The Qatar FIFA World Cup has boosted Middle East traffic in particular; it is up 18% on 2021, with the region seeing the continuation of record breaking numbers over 2019 and 2021 levels. Meanwhile figures for Asia are up by 30% and Africa by 16% compared to the same period last year.

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The US extends aircraft registration period

At the end of November, the US FAA released a rule to extend the validity of aircraft registration certificates by four years. The duration will run for seven years rather than the current three. According to the new rule, owners of both commercial and non-commercial/general aviation aircraft will be required to confirm registration and renew registration certificates at least every seven years. The current three-year rule was introduced in 2010. Before that date, registration was for an indefinite period provided that the registration was kept updated. This 'open' system was found to be open to abuse and saw a number of obsolete registrations remaining current because some owners did not comply with the rule to maintain current registration.

The NBAA welcomed the rule change. Director of Flight Operations and Regulations Brian Koester said: "We applaud the FAA for hearing our concerns over the current requirements and making this change. The new rule comes with tangible benefits that will help drive convenience and efficiency for business aircraft owners."

Aircraft shipments rise across all sectors in Q3

The General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) has reported overall increased aircraft shipments in Q3 compared to the same period in 2021. According to its Third Quarter 2022 General Aviation Aircraft Shipment and Billing Report, average shipments were up by 6.7%. Broken down by sector, this equates to bizjet shipments increasing by 1.8% (446 units), turboprops by 7.3% (383) and piston aircraft by 8.8% (1,012). Overall billing also increased by 4.8%, to reach USD14.1 billion.

These 'across the board' increases come despite all the challenges brought about by the Covid pandemic. GAMA President and CEO Pete Bunce said: "Demand for general aviation aircraft remains hardy as our industry continues to strategically navigate ongoing challenges, which include issues with supply chain and workforce shortages within our industry and within global regulatory authorities. Deliveries are converging on, and in some cases surpassing, the levels we were experiencing prior to the pandemic, which is a testament to the strength of our industry and the importance and utility of general aviation."

Corporate aircraft news

On 2 December, the FAA joined Transport Canada and EASA in certifying the Pratt & Whitney Canada PW812D – the engine that will power the new Dassault Falcon 6X twinjet. The 6X is entering the final flight test stage before certification and service entry, which remains on schedule for mid-2023. The engine has undergone some 6,100 hours of testing, a figure that includes 1,150 hours of flight testing. According to Dassault Aviation chairman and CEO Eric Trappier: "Together, the PW812D engine and Falcon 6X aircraft are a winning combination, designed to set the bar in fuel efficiency, performance, and comfort."

Fractional specialist NetJets has placed an order for four Bombardier Global 8000 with a total purchase value of USD312 million at list price. This order makes NetJets the first fleet customer for the Canadian OEM's new ultra-long-range flagship. The plan is to develop a fleet of 24 Global 8000s by converting eight existing Global 7500 orders to the 8000 marque and also upgrading existing in-service 7500s to 8000 standard when Bombardier gains certification for the model and is in a position to issue a service bulletin for the conversion. The 8000 is due to enter service in 2025. NetJets currently boasts a worldwide fleet of more than 850 aircraft, a number tghat looks set to continue to grow.

Sandpoint, Idaho-based winglet maker Tamarack Aerospace has submitted a number of city-pair speed record claims for flights by Beechcraft King Air 350 equipped with the company's SmartWing winglets. The aircraft was en route to display at the NBAA-BACE in Orlando.

The team at Sovereign's aviation division and the worldwide Sovereign Group would like to send seasonal greetings to all readers of Airborne, as well as our best wishes for 2023



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \ \

Airbus A300-600R



CATEGORY

Heavy jet

MANUFACTURER

Airbus, multi-national

ENGINE

2 x GE CF6-80C2 or P&WC PW4158 turbofans

LENGTH

54.08 m

WINGSPAN

44.84 m

RANGE

7,500 km

MAX. SPEED

1,004 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

345 in airline service

NO. OF CREW

2

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

171,700 kg

DESCRIPTION

The Airbus A300 programme was officially launched at the Paris Air Show in May 1969 with the signing of an agreement between Germany and France to build the world's first twin-engine wide-body airliner. The A300 was essentially designed as a lower cost and lighter competitor to the American TriStar and DC-10 trijets. Air France agreed the first order for the 281-seat A300B2 in 1970. The aircraft made its first flight in 1972 and entered service in 1974.

The A300-600 (officially the A300B4-600) was launched in 1983, making its first flight in July that year and entering service with Saudi Arabian Airlines 11 months later. This version was a slightly stretched version of the original A300B2 and featured an improved wing and a similar cockpit to the smaller but more advanced A310. Airbus extended the range of the -600 with the introduction of the A300-600R in 1988. This variant featured an additional fuel tank in the tail. The final passenger example was delivered in 2002.