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Shifting sands in the Middle East - MEBAA 2018

Appearances can be deceptive. MEBAA 2018 – the Middle East and North Africa Business Aviation show – opened in Dubai on 10 December at a time when the bizav market in the region could at best be described as 'brittle'. The event was the first to be held since Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates declared an economic embargo against Qatar, which includes forbidding Qatari planes to cross their airspace. A crackdown on corruption in Saudi Arabia has also severely dented the kingdom's private jet industry with dozens of planes, owned by individuals and charter companies, stranded at airports across the kingdom.

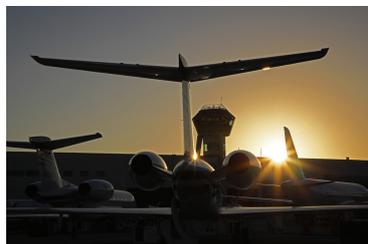
MEBAA, however, sought to promote the strength of the business aviation sector in the region and its prospects for growth going forward. Returning to its now familiar home at Dubai World Central (DWC), it hosted some 452 exhibitors along with a static park of 34 aircraft, over half of which were making their debuts.

It is estimated that the Middle East accounts for up to 70% of the global wide body business jet market, so it was no surprise that OEMs chose to tailor their displays accordingly. The static park featured examples of both the BBJ 787 and Airbus A340-500, while Boeing used the show to announce the launch of its new BBJ 777X, which is promoted as the world's longest-range business jet.

Gulfstream brought the new generation G500 and G600 for their MEBAA debuts, while its flagship G650ER set a new city pair record to get to the show – covering the trip from Teterboro NJ to Dubai in just 11hrs 2mins. Dassault brought its Falcon 8X, Embraer the Lineage 1000E and Sukhoi the VIP version of the SuperJet S5100.

The MEBAA Conference Dubai 2018, held over the last two days of the show, brought together some 200 industry delegates and, for the first time, was integrated with the main show on the exhibition floor. Sessions covered a diverse range of technical and more esoteric discussions – from the future of private aircraft design, aspects of cyber security, bizaviation finance and in-flight connectivity, to the use of blockchain technology in corporate aviation and climate change.

RANA attended the show in the person of Paul Arnold, our new Representative in the Middle East. "MEBAA 2018 revealed a positive business outlook for the UAE and the wider-region," said Arnold. "This biennial show is the largest business aviation event in the Middle East and it once again attracted the crème de la crème of the global business aviation industry. The region continues to mature in terms of business aviation and the MEBAA 2020 edition promises to be even more impressive with the Dubai Expo 2020 being held just next door to the Dubai World Central purpose-built airshow site."



Photos - Paul Arnold

Bizav suffers under US shutdown

The US government has been subject to a partial shutdown since 21 December as President Trump and Congress remain at loggerheads over his demand for \$5 billion funding to build a wall on the US-Mexico border. The shutdown, which affected more than 800,000 employees in nine government departments and several federal agencies, is having a significant impact on business and general aviation.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) was deemed an essential agency under the terms of the 2018 Reauthorization Act, so the FAA Registry in Oklahoma City remains open during the shutdown but a number of its functions have been suspended. The FAA will continue its air traffic control (ATC) functions, along with the maintenance of ATC equipment and field inspections, but a total of 18,000 employees have been furloughed.

It is understood that aircraft registrations and renewals will continue, but legal opinions on structures – including non-citizen owner trusts – will not be provided because the FAA Aeronautical Central Counsel Office is not operating during the shutdown. Other FAA functions that are currently suspended include the issue of ferry/special flight permits, NextGen development, routine background checks and FAA written exams.

AVIATION SERVICES HUB:

RANA appoints new rep in the Middle East

RANA is delighted to announce the appointment of Paul Arnold as its new Representative - Middle East. Paul has worked in the UAE for 12 years having first re-located with Barclays Bank's UK Business Banking to develop the Corporate Emerging Markets division in Dubai. In 2008, he joined Lloyds Bank's Commercial Banking business, where he was primarily responsible for managing the unit's debt restructuring portfolio.

After joining Sovereign, Paul has been responsible for supporting individuals, SMEs and multinational corporations across a range of sectors to develop their market-entry or merger and acquisition strategies in the UAE and wider-GCC region.

Paul's passion for aviation and also photography began during childhood and, during his time in the Middle East, has enjoyed excellent opportunities to provide coverage across various media in the industry. As a result, Paul has developed close relationships in both the commercial and private aviation sectors and is exceptionally well placed to further strength Sovereign's aviation and corporate services.

Global 7500 to boost Bombardier forecasts

Canadian manufacturer Bombardier marked the entry into service of its flagship Global 7500 with a ceremony at its Montreal Dorval facility on 20 December. The 7500 is marketed as “the world’s largest and longest range business jet”. The first aircraft – registered C-FXAI – will be undertaking a demonstration tour in the next couple of months on behalf of Bombardier. The manufacturer expects to deliver up to 20 aircraft this year, with this number set to double in 2020. These figures are expected to boost the company’s business jet deliveries by more than 10% this year, according to presentations during Bombardier’s recent investor day.

VistaJet eyes the Global 7500

Programme and charter specialist VistaJet operates 72 Bombardier mid-size and large cabin Bombardier business jets, 59 of which are registered in Malta. In interesting comments reported during MEBA in Dubai, VistaJet COO Ian Moore noted that the company may buy up to ten Global 7500 aircraft. “We haven’t decided how many we’re likely to take, but there’s zero commitment,” Moore said. “It’s a \$70 million aircraft, and we have to be careful not to burden the company [with debt]. If you ask me what I would like: between five and ten 7500s in the future.” He went on to add that the 7500 “will be a game changer for us, and certainly for Bombardier, as well.”

Privatair ceases operations

Swiss business aviation group PrivatAir filed for insolvency and ceased operations on 5 December. PrivatAir was originally founded in 1977 as the corporate flying division of Greek shipping tycoons, the Latsis family, under the name Petrolair. Two years later it began offering business travel flights on a Boeing 737-200. The name was changed to PrivatAir in 1989 and the Swiss Federal Office of Civil Aviation granted it a commercial airline licence in 1995. The firm further established a significant reputation in corporate aircraft management, charter and sales. In recent years Privatair operated a number of BBJ aircraft on wet-lease services for commercial airlines, including Lufthansa flights from Frankfurt to Pune, Nairobi and Dammam, and from Dusseldorf to Newark, as well as SAS flights from Stavanger to Houston. The company employed 226 staff in Switzerland, Germany and Portugal.

Corporate aircraft news

In a headline-grabbing announcement at MEBA 2018, Boeing Business Jets unveiled a new model with the ability to fly “farther than any business jet ever built”. The BBJ 777X will be offered in two versions – the smaller BBJ 777-8 will have a range of 21,570km (11,645nm) and a spacious cabin of 302.5m². The longer BBJ 777-9, with a cabin of 342.7m², will offer a range 20,370km (11,000nm), which means it “can fly more than half way around the world without stopping”. The BBJ 777X is the VVIP version of the 777-9 airliner that is due for certification and service entry by mid-2020. Both versions of the BBJ 777X feature a greater wingspan, which has been made possible by the use of a composite wing with foldable wingtips. It is understood that delivery positions for interior outfitting will be available from mid-2021.

Cirrus Aircraft has received FAA certification for the latest version of its single engine Vision personal jet. The Vision Jet G2 (Generation 2) offers enhanced avionics, improved climb, greater range, higher speed and a higher maximum operating altitude following modifications to the FJ33-5A engine. Deliveries of the G2 are expected to begin this month.

In a highly significant milestone, Honda Aircraft received certification for its iconic HondaJet Elite from Japanese regulators (JCAB) on 7 December. Just two weeks later, the much-anticipated first aircraft was delivered to a Japanese customer.

On 20 December, Textron was granted provisional FAA type certification for its super mid-size Cessna Citation Longitude. It is understood that first deliveries of the aircraft are due to begin imminently. The provisional nature of the approval remains while the manufacturer negotiates with the FAA over its interpretation of fuel tank flammability requirements for the new model. The Longitude is the largest Citation in production and can accommodate up to 12 passengers. It first flew in October 2016.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

Boeing 757-200



CATEGORY

Heavy jet

MANUFACTURER

Boeing, USA

ENGINE

2 x RR RB211-535E4 or P&WC PW2000-37/40/43 turbofans

LENGTH

47.30 m

WINGSPAN

38.00 m

RANGE

7,250 km

MAX. SPEED

918 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

236 in airline service

NO. OF CREW

2

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

115,660 kg

DESCRIPTION

The Boeing 757 was one of a number of commercial airliners designed to replace the iconic and best-selling Boeing 727. The single-aisle twin made its first flight on 19 February 1982 and entered service with Eastern Airlines on 1 January 1983. Production of the 757 finished in 2004 with a total of 1,050 airframes rolling off the line.

The 757 was originally designed for use on high capacity short and medium-haul routes. Increased gross weight, powerplant improvements and modifications have however seen the aircraft routinely operate longer and “thinner” commercial routes. Although being retired by many of the large scale users of the aircraft, significant numbers remain in passenger service with many converted to carry freight or to operate in corporate/VVIP configuration. In addition, the aircraft is currently in service with a number of air arms serving in the VIP role or as part of transport squadrons. The US Air Force operates several aircraft as C-32A transports used by senior members of the US administration.