

NBAA-BACE 2020 falls victim to Covid-19

The domino effect continues. Following the cancellation of ABACE, EBACE and the Farnborough International Airshow, it was perhaps inevitable that NBAA-BACE 2020 would also fall to the pandemic. The world's largest business aviation event was due to be held in Orlando, Florida from 6 – 8 October.

The rationale for the cancellation announced by the NBAA on 1 July is clear and was largely dictated by guidance from public health officials. The Florida Department of Health had recently published an advisory recommending the avoidance of participation in gatherings of more than 50 people. Added to this equation were the myriad travel restrictions, in place both domestically within the US and from overseas.

NBAA President and CEO Ed Bolen said: "The promotion of safety is a primary reason NBAA was founded in 1947, and safety is at the foundation of all we are today. As Covid-19 has emerged as a pandemic, NBAA has consistently looked to local, state, federal and global health officials to inform our decisions and guide our actions with regard to live events."

NBAA 2021 will be held in Las Vegas from 12 – 14 October 2021.

Manufacturers and regulators work toward the 'new normal'

Aircraft manufacturers and regulators, including the FAA and EASA, are working in tandem to allow business to recover under a 'new normal', said Jens Hennig, VP Operations with the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA). Normal business levels will not return until there was a vaccine or cure for Covid-19, said Hennig pointing to stark evidence that manufacturer deliveries and billings had fallen by 20% in Q1, in part due to restrictions, slowdowns and delivery postponements. The 'new normal' would involve having to work within the boundaries of restrictions, including allowing domestic and international exemptions for aircrew to facilitate continued deliveries.

Signature unveils SignatureAssure

Signature Flight Support, the world's largest network of FBOs, has launched a new programme covering its response to the Covid-19 pandemic. SignatureAssure is being rolled out at each of its 200-plus locations worldwide to provide detailed recommended practices including detailed cleanliness checklists, requirements for social distancing, signage, floor markings, training for employees and the standard use of personal protection equipment (PPE). The company has also teamed up with National Car Rental to provide sanitised vehicles at each location.

UK introduces quarantine rules

Specialist private jet programme operator VistaJet is offering a new VistaJet-to-Yacht service through its Malta base to allow clients to bypass the 14-day quarantine period that currently applies to overseas visitors. Clients will be flown to Malta on a VistaJet aircraft adhering to health and safety protocols. Upon arrival, clients will have the use of a private lounge and direct transport from the airport to the marina. The firm's concierge will stock up the yacht in advance, while a local agent will arrange the marina berth and yacht handling. VistaJet will also offer vessel charter through its local agent or a broker of their choice.

North American and European traffic continues to grow

Global business aircraft traffic has continued to grow, according to the latest data produced by analyst WingX Advance. Overall traffic for June was down by 30% compared to 2019 levels but North American traffic has rebounded to 69% of normal levels. To underline this trend, forecasts from Argus International predict North American traffic in July and August to return to some 83% of normal for both months. This sense of optimism should be tempered by the need to reimpose lockdowns amid a new leap of coronavirus infections in certain US states.

In Europe, flight activity in June was down by some 50%, although there are signs of improvement within this bleak picture. Certain markets – particularly Germany, France and Switzerland – have seen notable recoveries from levels in April and May. Traffic in the UK increased markedly in the run-up to the introduction of mandatory 14-day quarantine regulations on 8 June, but then fell away. As an example both London Luton and Farnborough recorded a 70% decline in flights in June compared to 2019. WingX MD Richard Koe said: "Lockdown lifts have accelerated in Europe ... and the return in confidence is evident in the quicker recovery in flight activity. Whereas in North America the overall recovery has cooled, and although certain US states are seeing growth in activity, this may well be reversed if virus outbreaks require further lockdowns."

AVIATION SERVICES HUB: 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 of particular registries.

The carefully planned use of a company structure – or special purpose vehicle (SPV) – can provide 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. 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.

Jersey relaunches registry with blockchain

The British Crown Dependency of Jersey has relaunched its aircraft registry. The Jersey Aircraft Registry (JAR) was established in 2015 after protracted and ultimately unsuccessful negotiations to establish a joint register with its neighbouring island of Guernsey. JAR has not shared the Guernsey register's success: it has registered just three aircraft to date – a CitationJet CJ4, a Beech Baron B58 and a helicopter (since de-registered). As a result the Jersey government has introduced a new model that will see JAR operated by Ports of Jersey in partnership with IT specialist TrustFlight (Jersey). According to the revamped JAR website: "Jersey is building the world's first blockchain-enabled aircraft registry providing the fastest way to register your aircraft."

EU updates customs code for temporary admission

The European Union (EU) has acted to formalise and codify the Temporary Admission (TA) of aircraft to be used by entities and aircraft owned, operated, registered and based outside the EU customs territory. With effect from 16 July, aircraft will not be required to file formal customs declarations to use TA. Previously the filing of a flight plan was deemed to be a declaration when flying to a customs entry point within the EU. This arrangement has now been formally ratified and added to the EU Customs Code under Article 141(d). If an aircraft has not been formally imported, it will be deemed to be operating under TA.

Corporate aircraft news

In a landmark announcement, Gulfstream Aerospace confirmed it has taken the last order for the iconic G550 twinjet, with the final example due for delivery next year. The first G550 was rolled out on 19 June 2002 and more than 600 aircraft have entered service since then. The G550 has been replaced in the Gulfstream suite by the next generation G600.

Reaching another milestone, Gulfstream has also confirmed that the 200th example of the G280 twin has entered service. The first G280 was rolled out in December 2009, with the design receiving FAA certification in 2012. The G280 is built by Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI) on behalf of Gulfstream.

On 12 June, Textron Aviation marked a very significant anniversary as the iconic Cessna Skyhawk 172 celebrated 65 years since the aircraft made its first flight in 1955. A staggering 45,000 examples of the piston single have been delivered worldwide. The four-seat 172 is arguably the most popular aircraft in history in terms of longevity and numbers delivered.

Just three days later the manufacturer also announced the delivery of the 250th Cessna Citation M2 twinjet. The M2 was certified by the FAA in December 2013 and offers up to seven seats with single pilot operation.

On 25 June, Canadian manufacturer Bombardier announced that its entry level Global G5500 has entered service. The company did not disclose the identity of the launch customer. The G5500 received FAA certification in December 2019 and is the smallest of the company's suite of large cabin, long range Global aircraft.

Bombardier's flagship Global 7500 has become the world's first business jet to receive an Environmental Product Declaration (EPD). The EPD offers full transparency throughout the aircraft's life cycle through verification to international ISO standards and discloses very detailed information on key environmental areas including CO2 emissions and noise.

Brazilian manufacturer Embraer Executive Jets confirmed that Embraer Services & Support has completed the first retrofit conversion of a Legacy 450 twin to Praetor 500 standard. The works were carried out at the company's plant in Connecticut. The conversion includes increasing the aircraft's range, updates to avionics and the fitting of winglets.

On 2 July, US manufacturer Stratos Aircraft announced that the Stratos 716X personal single-engine jet had made its first flight from the firm's facility in Oregon. Designed to seat up to six, the aircraft will initially be supplied in kit form. The company estimates a build time of around 2,500 hours.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

VFW-Fokker 614



CATEGORY

Heavy jet

MANUFACTURER

VFW-Fokker, West Germany/Netherlands

ENGINE

2 x Rolls-Royce/SNECMA M45H Mk.501 turboprops

LENGTH

20.60 m

WINGSPAN

21.50 m

RANGE

1,195 km

MAX. SPEED

704 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

44 in airline service

NO. OF CREW

2

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

19,958 kg

DESCRIPTION

A total of three prototypes and 16 production examples of the VFW-Fokker 614 were built between 1971 and 1977. The original concept was conceived in the 1960s by West German entity Vereinigte Flugtechnische Werke (VFW), which eventually merged with Dutch manufacturer Fokker, as a replacement for the iconic Douglas DC-3. However the twinjet programme proved to be an abject failure when anticipated sales failed to materialise.

The design of the VFW-Fokker 614 was distinctive. The two engines were mounted within pods set on pylons above the wing. The Rolls-Royce/SNECMA turboprops were designed specifically for the 614; the principal aim of the powerplant was to reduce noise and therefore allow the aircraft to operate from small airports where noise abatement was a crucial limiting factor. The programme faced a number of challenges that limited orders – the liquidation of Rolls-Royce in 1971 and the loss of the first prototype in 1972. The Luftwaffe operated three examples in the VIP role.