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Global bizav traffic resurgent

The figures are remarkable and surprising. Global business aircraft activity has bounced back almost to pre-Covid levels, according to the latest data compiled by specialist analyst WingX Advance, and in the month of June jet and prop departures actually exceeded those in June 2019 by some 10%.

For the first six months of 2021 global bizav activity was just 4% down on the same period two years ago. By comparison, scheduled commercial airline activity remained at just 55% of 2019 levels over the same period.

The figures for North America were particularly striking. Traffic over the US 'Fourth of July' holiday was up by some 44%, or 11,000 departures, over 2019. This jump may be partially explained by the fourth falling on a Sunday this year, but it is the final steps in the opening up of the economy that appears to be the driving force behind the increased demand for domestic business aviation.

In Europe too, traffic levels are beginning to bounce back with the numbers for June this year running 2% higher than 2019. France is the key market, with activity already back to summer 2019. The UK is still well behind, however, with 21% fewer flights this June versus 2019. The EURO football championship catalysed very strong demand wherever the stadium cities have been open to visitors.

Business aviation "more important than ever"

As pandemic travel restrictions are eased, 81% of senior executives worldwide agreed that business aviation would be "more important than ever" in driving success as the world reopens, according to a new report by bizav aviation specialist operator VistaJet. The research, carried out in conjunction with WSJ Intelligence, surveyed more than 200 senior executives around the world, of which 97% noted that their businesses had been negatively impacted by restrictions on face-to-face meetings. One very clear finding underlines VistaJet's own substantial increase in traffic numbers. Clients are looking to business aviation for flexibility, efficiency, safety and privacy as markets reopen with 60% of respondents who undertook more than eight bizav flights annually now expecting a significant increase in 'in-person' meetings.

Bombardier launches 'Certified Pre-owned' programme

Bombardier is hoping to improve the options for clients looking to acquire pre-owned aircraft that it has manufactured. The Montreal-based OEM has launched a 'Certified Pre-owned' programme, offering a 'like new' offering to clients including a one-year manufacturer guarantee and operational support. Globals, Challengers and Learjets – many of which will have been traded in to the manufacturer as part of the acquisition process for newer models – will be offered under the programme. It will also offer other aircraft obtained through the open market.

Bombardier VP pre-owned aircraft services Chris Milligan said: "As life gradually begins to return to normal, the supply of business jets across the industry has been outpaced by demand. A Bombardier Certified Pre-owned aircraft provides the buyers with the highest quality preowned product, equipped with the latest safety and cabin enhancements, while providing the new aircraft delivery experience customers are looking for."

Global Jet Capital market forecast

The bizav market will see a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.4%, with total new and pre-owned bizjet transactions amounting to USD162.1 billion, according to the first full bizav market forecast provided by business aviation financial provider Global Jet Capital (GJC). The analysis, which covers the five-year period up to 2025, covered both preowned and new aircraft transactions across geographical market segments and aircraft sizes. Total transactions in 2021 are predicted to total 3,038 with a value of USD29.3 billion, rising to 3,743 transactions totalling USD36.3 billion in 2025.

Gulfstream to miss NBAA-BACE

NBAA-BACE, the world's largest business aviation event, will be held in person once again in Las Vegas from 12-14 October following its re-invention as a virtual event in 2020. In a recent update, organisers confirmed that fewer than 100 exhibition spaces remain to be filled. There will however be one very noticeable absentee. Gulfstream Aerospace has confirmed that it will not be attending this year's event. The OEM noted that its customers "have shared that their preference is for smaller events right now, and we are hosting those accordingly. We anticipate returning in the future." The city of Las Vegas lifted all Covid restrictions at the beginning of June.

AVIATION SERVICES HUB:

Aircraft registration

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' aircraft registry. A number of new registries have been launched over the last few years, while a number of other jurisdictions have widened their acceptance criteria to attract high value business and improve the services they offer to international clients. More will surely follow. Every registry seeks to attract owners and operators of corporate aircraft with what they consider to be a unique selling point. In such a niche market what may be an appropriate registration jurisdiction for one client may not work for another.

The reasons for registering an aircraft away from the owner's home base jurisdiction can be many and various. To attract this comparatively small but lucrative market, registries must be able to offer outstanding service, ease of process, cost-efficiency, flexibility in terms of aircraft acceptance and crew standards, as well as providing confidentiality and political neutrality. In addition, corporate ownership can some offer potential tax advantages, increased asset protection and limited liability.

2-REG - success in a dormant market

One of most notable successes for the Guernsey Aircraft Register (2-REG) since its launch in December 2013, has been the placement of dormant commercial airliners between operational leases. Lessors seeking a secure and safe jurisdiction in which to register aircraft that are in transition from one lease either to storage or their next operational base. This has been particularly true during the pandemic as airlines retrench, and promises, by the same token, to provide more demand as the airlines grow their fleets again. The latest 2-REG register, published at the beginning of this month, provides clear evidence of this market's continued success for the Channel Island register. Of 283 aircraft active on the register, 121 are commercial airliners falling under this transactional category.

US online register launch in October

The US aircraft registry is to move online from 5 October. The rollout of the new Civil Aviation Registry Electronic Services (CARES) by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will mean that functions of the registry currently handled manually will move to an online cloud-based system. The system overhaul was originally mandated by the US Congress in 2018, with a 2021 implementation target. CARES will provide an online platform to enable registration of US aircraft and unmanned aircraft systems. The system is aimed to make the registry more efficient and to make data more accessible and more transparent.

Jet Aviation expands in Switzerland

Swiss-headquartered business aviation service provider Jet Aviation has substantially expanded its footprint in Switzerland with the acquisition of ExecuJet's FBO and hangars in Zurich. It has also purchased Luxaviation's Swiss aircraft management and charter division. The two deals give the company a second FBO terminal in Zurich along with two hangars and two private ramps. It also adds a further 17 aircraft to its European fleet. Jet Aviation was founded in Basel in 1967 and now employs more than 4,000 staff worldwide offering aircraft charter, management and FBO facilities worldwide.

Corporate aircraft news

Gulfstream Aerospace marked the end of its iconic G550 programme by handing over the final example to a customer at the beginning of July. The large cabin twin received FAA certification on 14 August 2003 and was a derivative of the original Gulfstream GV, which was unveiled in 1999. Since then, the Savannah-based manufacturer has produced more than 600 examples of the aircraft. The announcement of the end of production came just a year ago. The popular aircraft is being replaced by the new generation G600 – the first example of which was delivered in June 2019.

In a further modification to the specifications for its new G700 flagship, Gulfstream is lowering the cabin altitude of the variant from 3,290ft to 2,916ft when flying at 41,000ft. Gulfstream president Mark Burns said: "This new, industry-leading cabin altitude is a result of our ongoing investments in customer health and safety and will provide even more comfort for passengers over the ultra-long-range flights the G700 is capable of achieving." The G700 is due to enter service at the end of 2022.

European regulator EASA granted approval to the Cessna Citation CJ4 Gen2 on 21 June, just five months after manufacturer Textron Aviation announced the upgrade to the light twinjet. The refinements include an enhanced cabin, including additional seating options, a new cabin management system, increased galley storage space, new ambient lighting and new folding airstairs.

Swiss OEM Pilatus Aircraft has unveiled a host of enhancements to its 'super versatile jet' PC-24. The upgrades to both the cockpit and cabin have been made following customer feedback and assessment of the fleet now that the aircraft has accrued more than 50,000 in service flight hours. The cabin now boasts lie-flat lightweight seats, which can be easily reconfigured as required depending on the mission. The forward left-hand closet can also be switched for a small galley. Changes to the cockpit have been developed in conjunction with Honeywell and include a new standard touchscreen controller and a flight control system that is designed to prevent unintended unusual attitudes by including tactile feedback in both roll and pitch. The avionics also include an automatic yaw trim function and a 'pilot defined' visual approach function.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \ \

Commander 114B



CATEGORY

Light single piston

MANUFACTURER

CAC Commander Aircraft Company, USA

ENGINE

1 x Lycoming IO-540-T4B5 piston

LENGTH

7.59 m

WINGSPAN

9.98 m

RANGE

1,100 km

MAX. SPEED

304 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

4

NO. OF CREW

1

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

1,474 kg

DESCRIPTION

154 examples of the Commander 114B were produced between 1992 and 2002. The 114B was developed after a 12 year hiatus following the closure of the production line of the Commander 114. The original Commander single engine piston (the 112) was developed by North American Rockwell and made its first flight on 4 December 1970 and entered service in 1972. Two upgraded models – the 112TC and the 114 were both introduced in 1976 and both featured new different engines.

The production line was closed down in 1980 after a total of 1,300 examples were built. The design and production rights were purchased by Gulfstream Aerospace but remained unused until the sale to CAC Commander Aircraft Company in 1988. The Commander 114B was a considerable upgrade to both the 112TC and 114. The 114B featured a new propeller, a strengthened airframe, a new streamlined cowling, a new leather interior, soundproofing and optional air conditioning.