



## AIRBORNE

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## NBAA's Ed Bolen sees 'helpful tailwinds' pushing bizav in 2021

Despite a decision to cancel 'in-person' events until the end of June, NBAA president and CEO Ed Bolen has pointed to 'helpful tailwinds' pushing a recovery for business aviation in 2021. In wide ranging comments made during successive podcasts, a 'town hall forum' and an appearance before the US House Subcommittee on Aviation, Bolen's message was clear, realistic but optimistic.

The main driver of Bolen's optimism is the large number of new clients who have turned to business aviation during the pandemic, seeing it as a flexible and safe way to travel. His key message is that 'bizav' must retain this new customer base by providing a good and reassuring service as the pandemic recedes. Anticipating economic recovery with the vaccination rollout and the easing of travel restrictions, Bolen said that bizav had demonstrated much stronger resilience than the commercial aviation sector. He also praised bizav's continued innovation in technology and its commitment to the increasing use of sustainable fuels.

In the absence of 'in-person' events, Bolen also pointed to the success of virtual platforms and events in keeping the sector networking and up to date. As part of this, the NBAA and EBAA are to host a virtual EBACE Connect on 18-19 May in place of this year's EBACE event in Geneva. EBACE Connect will bring together OEMs and sector representatives to discuss strategy and innovation for the recovery and development of business aviation.

## UK bizav posits guarded optimism

Business aviation in the UK may be going through the most challenging period in its history, but signs of growth or renewal are now appearing. This was the key message from this year's annual conference of the British Business & General Aviation Association (BBGA) – which was, of course, held virtually. Coping with the pandemic, a series of lockdowns, travel restrictions and uncertainties caused by Brexit had all certainly caused demand to shrink and operations to be drastically curtailed, but the picture may now be improving. Delegates pointed to a number of prospective 'green shoots': the speed of the UK's vaccination rollout; the 'roadmap' out of lockdown acting as a catalyst for a return of latent demand; as well as potential opportunities afforded by the UK's new status as a trading nation outside the EU.

## VistaJet report promotes collaboration

A clear majority of businesses serving high net worth individuals are now looking to establish collaborations outside their core spheres in order to mitigate the negative impact of travel restrictions during the pandemic. This was the key finding of a report entitled 'The Future of Private Travel' compiled by Malta-headquartered specialist programme operator VistaJet in conjunction with Barton, a London-based consultancy focused on the luxury sector. The report noted that innovative strategic partnerships covering different segments of the luxury travel market are being forged to offer an 'end-to-end' service that includes business aircraft, yachts, hotels and concierge providers. VistaJet COO Ian Moore said: "As consumers continue to be burdened with complicated travel restrictions, they look for simple solutions they know are safe and reliable. Collaboration between the best mobility and hospitality players on the ground provides not only peace of mind, but also the high-quality service and impeccable standards our customers have come to expect."

## Embraer, Dassault & Bombardier - 2020 deliveries

Following our look at the Q4/2020 numbers for Gulfstream and Textron last month, we turn to the remaining big three non-US OEMs that have now reported their figures.

Embraer – marked the certification of the Praetor 600 by Transport Canada by reporting a 35% fall in deliveries for the whole of 2020. The company delivered 86 executive jets in 2020, compared to 109 in 2019, comprising 56 light jets (Phenom 100/300) and 30 larger cabin aircraft. But the relative strength of the executive jet market was clear in comparison to the commercial sector. Embraer handed over just 44 commercial airliners last year, down from 89 in 2019.

Dassault Aviation – delivered 34 Falcon jets in 2020, compared to 40 in 2019, and further predicts deliveries of 25 units in 2021 on the back of reduced sales caused by the pandemic. On a brighter note it was looking forward to the first flight and further development of its new Falcon 6X large, long-range business jet.

Bombardier – The Canadian OEM delivered 44 business jets in Q4, of which 16 were of examples of the flagship Global 7500. For the whole of 2020 the company delivered 114 aircraft, down substantially from 142 in 2019, comprising 59 Globals, 44 Challengers and just 11 Learjets.

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## Learjet - the end of an era

Production of the iconic Learjet family of aircraft is to cease by the end of this year, according to an announcement made by Bombardier CEO Eric Martel on 11 February. American inventor and businessman William Powell Lear based his original design for a fast, small business jet aircraft on the Swiss FFA P-16 jet fighter. Having shifted operations to Wichita, Kansas, the first Learjet – the Model 23 – made its maiden flight on 7 October 1963 and the aircraft entered service the following year. In the intervening years, the Learjet has been developed through 14 baseline models with a number of variants serving a whole host of roles. A total of more than 3,000 Learjets have rolled off the production lines. Many industry commentators greeted the news with resignation, citing increased OEM competition in the small-medium cabin market. Bombardier made it clear that the end of the Learjet line will allow it to focus on its larger and longer range models, including its flagship Global 7500.

## NetJets goes supersonic

NetJets, the fractional ownership specialist operator owned by Berkshire Hathaway (BH), has acquired purchase rights for 20 Aerion Supersonic AS2 business jets. The deal is part of a wider memorandum of understanding with Aerion, linking BH-owned FlightSafety International to develop training for supersonic aircraft. The MOU also covers NetJets exclusive participation in 'Aerion Connect' – an integrated travel network incorporating multiple transport methods. Construction planning is underway at Aerion's 110-acre campus at Orlando Melbourne International Airport in Florida. It expects to begin production of the AS2 in 2023, with first flight a year later and commercial service entry targeted for 2026. The AS2 will seat up to 11 passengers and will operate at a top speed of Mach 1.4 (1,609kmh).

## IOM aviation conference postponed

Another high profile casualty of the Covid 19 pandemic and its attendant travel restrictions is the postponement, for the second time, of the hugely popular Isle of Man Aviation Conference, which had been slated for 16 June. The next event will now take place on 23 June 2022.

## Corporate aircraft news

In the wake of Bombardier's decision to cease production of the Learjet, Textron Aviation has also announced the cancellation of two models – the Cessna Citation Sovereign+ twinjet and the Beechcraft King Air C90GTx twin turboprop. The US manufacturer said this was due to considerable overlaps with other models it builds. The latest version of the Citation Sovereign has seen its sales fall following the introduction of both the Citation Longitude and Latitude. The King Air C90, despite successive upgrades over the last few years, has seen sales falter against other models in the King Air family.

Swiss manufacturer Pilatus has delivered the first example of its PC-24 'super versatile jet' in a high density ten-seat cabin configuration with all forward facing seats. The new 'commuter configuration' received FAA certification on 7 December. In its original configuration, the aircraft could seat up to eight passengers.

Since its first flight on 14 February 2020, the Gulfstream G700 flagship has now accumulated more than 1,100 development flight tests using five test vehicles. The aircraft should enter service by the end of 2022

Albuquerque-based One Aviation, which manufactured the Eclipse 550 'personal jet' from 2015 to 2018 and was developing the Eclipse 700, has failed to emerge from its Chapter 11 restructuring battle. In February, a US bankruptcy court ordered the liquidation of the remaining assets of the company, which was formed in 2015 to merge the aircraft manufacturers Eclipse Aerospace and Kestrel Aircraft. The Eclipse 550 was the successor to the base Eclipse EA500 manufactured by Eclipse Aviation until 2008. Close to 300 examples of the 500/550 were produced in total.

Dassault Aviation announced that the new Falcon 6X twinjet made its first flight from the company's plant at Bordeaux-Mérignac before on 10 March. The aircraft in question is appropriately registered F-WSIX. Sadly, the company is mourning the loss of board member Olivier Dassault, the grandson of Marcel Dassault who founded the company, in a helicopter crash three days earlier.



## AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

### Learjet 35A



#### CATEGORY

Mid-size jet

#### MANUFACTURER

Learjet, USA

#### ENGINE

2 x Honeywell TFE 731-2-2B turbopfans

#### LENGTH

14.81 m

#### WINGSPAN

12.04 m

#### RANGE

3,936 km

#### MAX. SPEED

870 kmh

#### SEATING CAPACITY

8

#### NO. OF CREW

2

#### MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

8,301 kg

#### DESCRIPTION

According to the latest available data, 442 Learjet 35A aircraft remain in both commercial and military service – from a total production run of 677 examples. As Bombardier signals its intention to cease production of the iconic Learjet family, it is testament to the popularity of the models that so many remain in operation worldwide.

The Learjet 35, which entered service in 1974, was a development of the model 25 featuring a slightly lengthened fuselage powered by the Honeywell TFE-731-2-2A powerplant. The 35A featured updated engines and a greater range due to increased fuel capacity and featured wingtip fuel tanks. The model received certification and entered service in 1976. Production continued until 1993, three years after the acquisition of Wichita-based Learjet by Canada's Bombardier. The Learjet 35A was produced in such large numbers because of its flexibility to operate in multiple roles – including executive transport, medevac and military liaison.