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China liberalisation and ABACE

The attention of the corporate aircraft market shifts to Shanghai and the Asian Business Aviation Conference and Exhibition (ABACE) just as the efforts by the Chinese authorities to accelerate the development of the general aviation industry are hotting up with a raft of new announcements. ABACE will run from 11 to 13 April from its now well-established venue at Shanghai's Hongqiao airport.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) recently dropped a requirement that enterprises or individuals be approved and recorded for purchasing general aviation aircraft and business jets. As part of a programme to streamline administration and deregulation, it also abolished the registration fee. CAAC has further announced a two-year project to expand and develop general aviation in four regions across the country – Northeast China, East China, Northwest China and Xinjiang. This is to improve efficiency, services and regulations along with improvements to infrastructure, which has long been seen as an inhibitor to expansion.

The general aviation industry in China has developed rapidly. However, as it started late, the industry is still small in scale with infrastructure construction lagging behind. These wide-ranging changes come as a major conference was held in California at the end of March to explore ways to expand the business and private aviation sector in China, particularly the opportunities this might afford to US companies.

Change at the top of EBAA

Brandon Mitchener took charge of the European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) on 3 April, succeeding Fabio Gamba as CEO. Gamba had been in place for five and a half years during which time industry commentators point to a high profile for the industry association. Mitchener is a well-known journalist and marketing specialist, who is also former head of communications in Europe and the Middle East for agrochemical corporation Monsanto.

Dassault sees no positive signs

In announcing its 2016 results, French manufacturer Dassault offered sobering predictions for 2017 and beyond. The company does not expect any meaningful recovery in the corporate aviation market to begin before 2018. Dassault recorded 21 net Falcon sales in 2016, down from 25 in the previous year. Both years' tallies were depressed by cancelled orders due in part to production delays in the Falcon 5X and the Safran Silvercrest powerplant. In total, the company delivered 49 aircraft – just missing its target of 50 – and it has estimated that it will hand over 45 Falcons of all marques in 2017. CEO Eric Trappier said: "There is huge pressure to lower prices due to the weakness of the pre-owned market and as a consequence on the new aircraft market. So we don't see any positive signs in the market this year and the recovery should be achieved in 2018."

Jersey register performance

The Hansard record of the Jersey States Assembly from 14 March 2017 confirmed details of the performance of the island's aircraft register since it launched in November 2015. A single corporate jet and one helicopter have been added generating fees of £11,789, with development and running costs totalling £860,801. In advance of this meeting of the States there were local press reports that the government was planning to scrap the registry. These reports were denied by Deputy Murray Norton, the island's Assistant Economic Development Minister. Minister Morton confirmed that a new team had been put in place and were "working towards a redesign and on a new model to improve performance. This work is ongoing and expected to finalise in the coming months."

Guernsey register hits 100 aircraft

The Guernsey-based Channel Islands Aircraft Registry, marketed as "2-REG", confirmed that it had reached the landmark of 100 aircraft current on the register. 2-REG has registered some 176 aircraft since its launch in December 2013. The tally of corporate jets is a comparatively small portion of the total, although this sector is increasing. The register has made the bulk of its allocations in working with commercial aircraft leasing companies, adding dormant airliners often for a very short period of time in between leases. In fact, the 100th aircraft falls into this category – a Boeing 737 airliner that was previously on the US register.

Strong growth in European business aviation traffic

In a marked change of tone, the monthly analysis for March produced by aviation intelligence specialist WINGX Advance, reports "exceptionally strong growth". There were 67,231 business aviation departures last month – an increase of some 8% YoY. This can be explained in part because Easter fell in March 2016 but the trend for Q1 is up by 5% over the same period last year. WINGX Managing Director Richard Kow described the increase as "the most positive Q1 for some years". Flights by business jets rose by 6% YoY with turboprops and piston aircraft also seeing strong growth. Geographically, the German market saw the highest growth with an 18% increase in March over 2016. France, the UK, Austria and Switzerland also saw significantly increased traffic.

RANA SERVICE CENTRE: Insurance

Sovereign Insurance Services (SIS) is a fully licensed independent general insurance intermediary based in Gibraltar. The strength of the Sovereign brand combined with the expertise and experience of the SIS team has enabled it to build relationships with leading insurers throughout the world. With direct links to specialist underwriters based in London and elsewhere, SIS can provide wide-ranging bespoke insurance cover for owners of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters. The team further offers market insight, expertise and competitive pricing, together with efficient and professional claims' handling. Specialist aviation insurance covers the full range – from public liability through to hull insurance for new or used airframes. The SIS team will quote on all types of aviation asset – from corporate jets and turboprops, general aviation aircraft and helicopters to FBOs, flying schools or commercial passenger or freight operators. SIS also specialises in areas such as kidnap and ransom insurance, which may be of interest to aircraft owners and operators.

Single engine changes come into force

New regulations allowing for expanded commercial operations by single engine turbine aircraft in Europe came into effect on 22 March after two decades of industry lobbying, flight record analysis and attempts to reach consensus. The new rules permit commercial operations in instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) and at night, which finally brings Europe into line with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards for CAT operations.

Commenting on the changes, specialist aviation lawyer Austen Hall of Austen Hall Limited said: "Following studies and consultations, EASA recognised that accidents involving single-engine turbine aircraft operating at night or in IMC were rarely caused by engine failure, but often by pilot error or adverse weather, with CFIT (Controlled Flight Into Terrain) and loss of control being the major causes ... The SET-IMC Regulation is good news for manufacturers such as Pilatus, Cessna and TBM Daher, and potentially opens up the possibility for new routes that can benefit from this type of aircraft operations."

Corporate aviation not affected by laptop ban

High profile programme and charter operator VistaJet announced on 14 March that it had reached a new landmark of 100,000 flights since its foundation by Thomas Flohr in 2004. The operator has enjoyed rapid expansion over the last few years and now boasts a worldwide fleet of some 71 Bombardier aircraft. A total of 60 of the fleet are currently registered in Malta. The operator took delivery of 15 aircraft last year alone and now claims to have transported some 250,000 passengers to more than 1,600 airports in 187 countries. In notes to the press, VistaJet said that as much as 40% of its new business now came from former aircraft owners and fractional share owners.

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Corporate aircraft news

Embraer delivered the first Phenom 100EV light jet on 31 March. The aircraft was delivered from the Brazilian manufacturer's plant in Melbourne, Florida, and was handed over to an undisclosed customer in the US. First announced at the 2016 EAA AirVenture, the Phenom 100EV is an upgraded version offering new Pratt & Whitney PW617F1-E powerplant specifically designed for operation in "hot and high" conditions and a Prodigy Touch flight deck based on the Garmin 3000. The Phenom first entered service in 2008 and over 350 Phenom 100s are in service.

On the same day and from the same Florida plant, Embraer also delivered the 400th Phenom 300 – this particular example joining the fleet of EliteJets.com, a Naples, Florida-based charter operator. The Phenom 300 was the best-selling business jet of 2016.

One Aviation, the manufacturer of the Eclipse 550 very light jet has disclosed that it is considering the phase out of the model as it concentrates on the new Eclipse Canada. The Canada will feature increased wingspan and an integrated Garmin G3000 avionics suite. It is expected that it will be powered by newer more powerful P&WC PW615 engines. The Canada is expected to enter service by early 2019.

The Gulfstream G500 is on track to enter service by the end of this year. The Savannah-based manufacturer has confirmed that the development testing stage has been completed and the five test aircraft have accumulated some 2,600 hours as part of the road to FAA design certification.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

Boeing 767-200(ER)



CATEGORY

Heavy jet

MANUFACTURER

Boeing, USA

ENGINE

2 x P&W JT9D-7R4/7R4E, P&W PW4052/56, GE CF680A/A2/C2-B2/C2-B4, RB211-524G/H turbofans

LENGTH

48.51 m

WINGSPAN

47.57 m

RANGE

12,200 km

MAX. SPEED

914 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

290 in airline service

NO. OF CREW

2

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

136,078 kg

DESCRIPTION

The Boeing 767-200 was Boeing's first twin-jet wide body commercial airliner. The base version entered service in 1982 with the extended range 767-200(ER) joining Israeli airline EL AL in 1984. A year later, the 767-200(ER) became the first twin to receive approval for Extended-range Twin-engine Operational Performance Standards (ETOPS). The -200(ER) offered an increased MTOW and an additional centre fuel tank. The 767 was further developed and lengthened with both the 767-300(ER) and 767-400(ER). Responding to airline demand, in 1986, Boeing began work on a high capacity aircraft design, this culminated in the launch of the 777.

The -200(ER) has, in recent years, found a new lease of life as former airline operated models have been refitted for operation in VVIP roles with both corporate entities and government air arms. The bulk of the remaining small numbers in commercial service are now operating for cargo operators following freight conversion.