

Manufacturers - how were the first six months for you?

The delivery figures from major aircraft original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) for the first six months of this year reflect continued 'sluggishness' in the marketplace. There are some encouraging signs but there are also some notable and significant falls. Only two of the five main manufacturers reported an increase in deliveries and these were very small.

Brazilian manufacturer Embraer handed over 39 aircraft in the year to 30 June. This figure is down from the 49 it recorded for the same period last year and demonstrates a considerable weakening in the light jet market. It delivered eight fewer Phenom class light jets but only two fewer large jets. However second-quarter output was more promising, with Embraer shipping 24 business jets between April and June, compared with 26 units during the same period in 2016. This included eight larger cabin aircraft compared to five in the same period last year.

Textron Aviation fared a little better but only within the jet segment of its business. The manufacturer delivered a total of 81 Cessna Citation aircraft in the first six months of this year – a small increase over the 79 it handed over in the same period last year. However deliveries of its King Air turboprop fell substantially – down to 31 compared to 49 in the first six months of 2016.

Dassault recorded an increase in Falcon deliveries having handed over 17 units compared to the 15 it logged in the same period in 2016. The French manufacturer made it clear in its investor call that stagnating prices for pre-owned aircraft were dampening the demand for new aircraft, a theme echoed by each of the OEMs.

Bombardier delivered 65 corporate jets in the first half of this year – a fall of eight units over the same period last year. The company confirmed however that it was not changing its forecast for a total of 135 aircraft for the whole of 2017 – down from the 163 it handed over in 2016, which was itself an 18% fall over 2015.

Overall, Gulfstream handed over 60 aircraft in H1 2017, compared to 64 in H1 2016. In terms of breakdown, this represented a decline of three large cabin and one mid-size aircraft. On a positive note however, it also reported that Q2 2017 had seen the highest number of orders for its flagship G650 and G650ER since the end of 2015.

US business aviation flying on the rise

There is encouraging news for the US corporate aviation sector according to data published by specialist analyst Argus International. Its latest TraqPak report, which covered the first six months of 2017, shows an overall 3.9% increase in flight activity over the same period last year. In addition, the overall number of flight hours has increased by 6% over 2016. The strongest growth was recorded by Part 135 operations (compensation or hire), which saw activity increase by some 10.1%. By contrast, flight numbers under Part 91 (private) fell by 0.5% although Argus pointed to the prospect of more encouraging data for the second half of the year. On a more positive note, flight activity under Part 91K (fractional) rose by 5.7% and a 7.9% increase in hours flown. All categories of aircraft reflected increases. Activity by large cabin aircraft showed a 10.5% increase over 2016 – a total of 475,580 flight hours. By contrast, flight hours by turboprops grew by just 3%. Mid-size aircraft hours also increased by a significant 7.3%. In summary, flight activity has increased every month since the beginning of 2017.

Gama's 100,000 sectors for Wheels Up

Wheels Up, which offers its US clients what it describes as a 'revolutionary membership model' currently owns a fleet of King Air 350 and Cessna Citation Excel XLS which are operated on its behalf by Gama Aviation LLC. On 5 July the company confirmed that it had operated the 100,000th sector for Wheels Up. The landmark sector was flown between Jacksonville FL and Nashville TN. Five days earlier the company operated more than 100 passenger sectors, itself an unprecedented number.

Opposition to US ATC privatisation grows

There is growing and very vocal opposition to US President Trump's proposals to privatise the country's air traffic control system. On 12 July the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) joined 100 general aviation industry organisations in expressing absolute opposition to H.R.2997. The statement signed by the groups pointed out that the proposed reforms "will produce uncertainty and unintended consequences without achieving the desired outcomes. We have concluded that any structural and governance reforms that require protections for an important sector of users is fundamentally flawed." Ed Bolen, President and CEO of the NBAA added, "The group is sending a loud and clear signal of opposition to ATC privatization that echoes the same position held by other groups on the political left and right, elected officials at the federal and local levels and a majority of American citizens." and

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Consultancy

Sound, accurate and up to date information is a key requirement for making the right decisions in respect of sourcing, owning, registering and operating an aircraft. RANA's specialist aviation consultancy service can draw upon a breadth of knowledge across both the corporate and commercial aviation markets, which is coupled to our established links with authorities, manufacturers, service providers and operators.

The spectrum of our expertise encompasses: technical and performance specifications of competing aircraft models – from small pistons and turboprops through the whole range of corporate jets to commercial airliners; research and detailed reporting on the operational history of individual airframes and operators both private and commercial; the registration and ownership requirements of registries worldwide; and the most suitable and efficient corporate structures for holding aviation assets. In a nutshell, we can add real value to the decision-making process and provide peace of mind built on a sound foundation.

Stratos 714 breaks cover

Oregon-based manufacturer Stratos Aircraft displayed its Stratos 714 'very light personal jet' for the first time at this year's EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, in July. The four seat aircraft was first announced in July 2008 and, after a protracted development programme, first flight of a proof of concept aircraft, registered N403KT, was achieved on 21 November 2016. This public introduction took place despite the company's assertion in February that it did not have the funding to complete certification and was no longer accepting deposits from customers.

Deer Jet 787 on tour

Deer Jet's Guernsey-registered Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner 2-DEER continues to gather headlines. The aircraft, now available for worldwide charter, completed a 'Dreams Encounter the World' promotional tour when it flew into the Paris Air Show 2017 in June having visited Hong Kong, London, Shanghai, Dublin, Doha, Seattle and Marrakech. The wide body airliner is configured for just 30 passengers and its lavish interior reflects the result of a cabin outfitting which took some two and a half years to complete. The aircraft is being marketed to the very highest end of charter clients willing to cover the hourly charge of \$70,800. Deer Jet is the charter operation branding for Beijing Capital Airlines.

Dassault delivers 2,500th Falcon

French manufacturer Dassault Aviation marked the delivery of the 2,500th Falcon corporate jet on 2 July. The latest delivery, of a Falcon 900LX, comes more 52 years after the handover of the firm's first aircraft (a Falcon 20) back in 1965. The latest aircraft was delivered to a US customer from the manufacturer's completion centre in Little Rock, Arkansas. According to company statistics, the Falcon fleet has recorded some 17.8 million flying hours with aircraft having been registered in over 90 jurisdictions. Dassault's CEO and chairman Eric Trappier said: "Of the 2,500 Falcons delivered to date, more than 2,100 are still flying – which is a clear testimony to the high quality and robustness of our Falcon aircraft and the dedication of those that support them."

Corporate aircraft news

In a significant landmark for the project, Swiss manufacturer Pilatus confirmed that it mated the wings to the fuselage of the first production PC-24 twin on 12 July. The flagship aircraft is due to receive certification during Q4 of this year. The first production aircraft is due to be delivered to US fractional specialist operator PlaneSense, which has a sizeable fleet of PC-12 turboprop singles. The new Williams International FJ44-4A-QPM turbofan, which is to power the PC-24, has also now received FAA and EASA certification. Among the features of the new engine is a 'quiet power mode' that removes the need for a traditional APU.

On 13 July the first Embraer Legacy 500 to be assembled at the Brazilian manufacturer's assembly plant in Melbourne, Florida, took to the skies for the first time. The company's US plant also provides final assembly for Legacy 500, Phenom 100 and Phenom 300 models. It is understood that Embraer intends to shift most of the manufacturing process for the Legacy 450 and 500 from Brazil to the US in due course.

In a major milestone, Bombardier has confirmed that the flight test pre-certification programme for the Global 7000 has reached the 500 hours mark. The first aircraft entered the programme in November 2016 and the design is now on track for certification during the second half of 2018.

In a month of landmarks, Gulfstream Aerospace also recorded the delivery of the symbolic 550th Gulfstream G550. The flagship twin entered service in 2003.

US manufacturer One Aviation has confirmed that its new very light twin provisionally known as 'Project Canada' will now be known as the Eclipse 700. The aircraft will be a development of the current Eclipse 500 and 550 and features improved avionics, new powerplant and greater wingspan.

The Daher TBM 910 made its US public debut at EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh at the end of July. The new turboprop succeeds the TBM 900 version with the incorporation of a next-generation Garmin G1000 NXi avionics suite, along cabin interior and safety enhancements.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

Hawker 400XP



CATEGORY

Light jet

MANUFACTURER

Hawker Beechcraft, USA

ENGINE

2 x P&WC JT15D-3 turboprops

LENGTH

14.76 m

WINGSPAN

13.26 m

RANGE

2,778 km

MAX. SPEED

818 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

9

NO. OF CREW

2

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

7,393 kg

DESCRIPTION

The Hawker 400XP is a light twin jet that can trace its lineage back to 1978 when the design was originally produced by Japanese manufacturer Mitsubishi as the MU-300 Diamond. The production rights were purchased by US manufacturer Beechcraft, which then re-launched the aircraft as the Beechjet 400. In 1993 the aircraft was re-designated as the Hawker 400 following Raytheon Beechcraft's purchase of the Hawker family of corporate jets from British Aerospace. A higher gross weight version was launched in 2003 as the Hawker 400XP. This version also included a number of enhancements brought in from the larger Hawker 800XP. In 2008 the manufacturer announced a re-engined version designated as the 450XP although this was cancelled a year later.

The Hawker 400XP has subsequently undergone two programmes to enhance the design. The manufacturer's 400XPR and Nextant Aerospace 400XT both offer the aircraft with new interior, winglets, powerplant and avionics.