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Dassault unveils new Falcon

French manufacturer Dassault Aviation has snatched positive headlines from what could have been a public relations disaster. Last December the company was forced to cancel development of the twin-jet Falcon 5X owing to the protracted and much-publicised problems with the Safran Silvercrest engines that had been lined up to power the new model. But on 28 February, Dassault's chairman and CEO Eric Trappier unveiled a new long-range twin slated to make its first flight in 2021 and then enter service in 2022.

The Falcon 6X is a complete redesign and will be powered by Pratt & Whitney Canada PW812D, a more powerful engine than the Silvercrest. The 6X features a fuselage that is 50cm longer than the cancelled model, along with new wings incorporating flaperons. The aircraft will offer a range of 10,200km, allowing it to link Los Angeles with London, and will also feature what Dassault claims will be "the most spacious cabin in the long-range segment".

EBAA parts from CEO after 11 months

In a surprise move, the European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) announced on 5 March that it had agreed to "part ways" with its new CEO Brandon Mitchener. The former journalist and marketing specialist, who replaced Fabio Gamba in the role on 3 April 2017, had previously been Head of Communications in Europe and the Middle East for agrochemical business Monsanto. EBAA Chairman Juergen Wiese confirmed that the organisation's board of governors would maintain operational continuity and oversight until a replacement could be appointed. The reasons for Mitchener's departure remain unclear although observers have pointed to his criticism of the board in blocking proposed changes to the organisation.

New Aerion COO to guide AS2

Tom Vice, former President of the Aerospace Systems division of US defence contractor Northrop Grumman, has been appointed as President and COO of US aircraft manufacturer Aerion Corporation. Nevada-based Aerion is currently developing the AS2 supersonic business jet (SSBJ). It is understood that Vice will take a 'leading role' in the project as it moves forward to a projected first flight in 2023 with certification two years later.

Global shipments on the up

The General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) confirmed a significant increase in new aircraft shipments in 2017 in its annual 'State of the Industry' press briefing. Overall, fixed wing business and general aviation manufacturers shipped some 2,324 aircraft in 2017 – an increase of 2.5% over the previous year. In addition, deliveries of rotorcraft leapt by nearly 7.5%. In terms of aircraft split, business jet deliveries increased by 1.3% and piston craft by 6.47%, although shipments of turboprops fell very slightly. On a negative note, GAMA noted that billings fell by some \$900 million to \$20.2 billion. This fall was attributed to both the mix of aircraft delivered and the pricing pressures felt by manufacturers.

Bombardier's 2017

Canadian manufacturer Bombardier delivered 140 corporate jets in 2017. This represented a 16.4% fall on the 163 it handed over in 2016, but was an increase of five over the projected total it had announced at the beginning of the year. The firm's outlook for 2018 remains 'flat' with 135 units projected, although the company anticipates a positive year based on Q4 2017 orders and the impending certification and entry into service of its new Global 7000 flagship.

Isle of Man registers 1,000th aircraft

The Isle of Man Aircraft Registry reached a major landmark with the registration of its 1,000th aircraft on 3 March. Gulfstream G650ER M-JSWB joined 17 other examples of Gulfstream's flagship current on the register. The registry, which went live on 1 May 2007 under then Director of Civil Aviation Brian Johnson, is now the sixth largest corporate aviation registry in the world and the second largest (after Germany) in Europe.

Despite featuring in many media stories following the so-called 'Paradise Papers' leak of 13.4 million documents relating to offshore investments, the Isle of Man Aircraft Registry has continued to add an average of some six aircraft per month over the last six months. Industry insiders point to the registry's customer service, competitive cost and ease of process as reasons for this success.

Analysis of the full register makes for interesting reading. Of the 1,000 aircraft registered, 432 remain current as this issue of Airborne goes to press. Unsurprisingly, corporate jets make up the bulk of this total, with 313 registered. The register also boasts 50 helicopters and 49 large turboprops. The remainder is comprised of eight small piston aircraft, below the 5,700kg MTOW rule, that are owned by Manx residents and some 12 commercial airliners that are temporarily registered between operational leases.

AVIATION SERVICES HUB:

Ownership structures

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 for asset protection, including tax and succession planning, as well as advising on the requirements and restrictions of particular registries.

The correct use of a company structure – or special purpose vehicle (SPV) – can offer a number of 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 inheritance tax and succession planning, as well as simplifying any future sale of the asset, resulting in savings of time and cost. Sovereign can establish structures in jurisdictions worldwide that are best suited to the owner's place of residence, domicile, the aircraft's registration and intended usage.

Gama Aviation raises capital

Farnborough-based Gama Aviation, which markets itself as “the global business aviation service company”, raised £48 million (\$67 million) in equity through a share issue in early February. The company’s Hong Kong partner, Hutchison Whampoa, is taking 21% of the new issue and plans to be a long-term investor in the UK business. Gama will use \$20 million to invest in its US maintenance business and in its Sharjah FBO in the UAE. It hopes to use the rest of the money to buy aircraft operators or maintenance companies in Europe and the Middle East. “We have put the people and systems in place that we needed to grow,” says Marwan Khalek, CEO of Gama Aviation, “we just needed the capital, and this capital raising has given it to us.”

ATC privatisation off the agenda

Corporate aviation industry groups including the NBAA have welcomed the news that legislation aimed at allowing the privatisation of US air traffic control will not be taken forward in its current form. The legislation, which was first introduced in June 2017, was described by NBAA President and CEO Ed Bolen as a “breath-taking power grab” in favour of commercial airlines who stood to benefit most from the proposed changes. The chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Bill Shuster, confirmed that the proposed reform of air traffic control failed to receive sufficient support from Congress to progress.

European traffic growth steady

European business aviation traffic continues its steady growth according to the latest issue of Business Aviation Monitor produced by industry analyst WINGX. Traffic in February stood at 57,037 flights – an uplift of some 4.5% over February 2017. Overall corporate jet departures increased by 3% although charter traffic was up by some 5%. Geographically, Western and Central Europe as a whole saw strong growth, with an increase of some 9% in business jet activity recorded in Spain. Charter activity increased by some 10% in both France and Germany emphasising the power of the sector in driving growth

‘Most delivered’ of 2017

The ‘most delivered’ business jet’ in 2017 was the Bombardier Challenger 350, according to data produced by the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA). It took the crown from the Embraer Phenom 300, which held the accolade for the previous four years. The Challenger 350 racked up a total of 56 examples, while only 54 examples of the light jet Phenom 300 were handed over – the same total as the Cessna Citation Latitude, which took the title of ‘most delivered mid-size business jet’. The most delivered light jet was the Honda Aircraft HA-420 HondaJet, of which 43 were handed over in 2017.

Corporate aircraft news

On 7 March, Bombardier chalked up 15 years since the first flight of the Global 5000. Originally announced on October 2001, the 19-seat aircraft was first displayed at the Paris Airshow in June 2003. A total of 224 aircraft remain in service with operators worldwide.

At the beginning of March, US technology company Garmin confirmed that the first Cessna Citation XLS to be retrofitted with the G5000 integrated flight deck had made its first flight from the manufacturer’s plant at Olathe, Kansas. The new flightdeck provides a weight saving and is due for service entry in early 2019. It will be offered by Garmin itself and through Textron Aviation.

French air taxi operator Wijet has signed a memorandum of understanding with Honda Aircraft Company to order 16 HA-420 HondaJet aircraft. The order, valued at \$80 million list price is the largest order for the type that the manufacturer has received so far and is a significant boost to the project. The HondaJets are expected to replace the company’s current fleet of 16 Cessna Citation 510 Mustangs.

It is understood that FAA certification of the super mid-size Cessna Citation Longitude is now imminent, with deliveries set to begin later this year. The first production aircraft was recently displayed at the Singapore Air Show. The Longitude is set to fill the middle ground for Cessna owner Textron Aviation, with the mid-size Latitude already in service and the larger Citation Hemisphere now slated for its first flight in 2019.



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \\\

Dassault Falcon 8X



CATEGORY

Large size jet

MANUFACTURER

Dassault Aviation, France

ENGINE

3 x P&WC PW307D turbofans

LENGTH

24.46 m

WINGSPAN

26.29 m

RANGE

11,945 km

MAX. SPEED

955 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

19

NO. OF CREW

3

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

33,113 kg

DESCRIPTION

The Falcon 8X is French manufacturer Dassault Aviation’s flagship. The tri-jet 8X is the largest of the Falcon family of corporate jets. The project was first announced at EBACE in Geneva in May 2014, with a prototype making its first flight on 6 February 2015. The 8X then received EASA and FAA certification in June 2016 with the first delivery being made in October of that year.

The manufacturer hails the 8X as “a new Falcon that can fly you farther, in greater comfort, and with even more efficiency.” The 8X derives much of its design from the very popular Falcon 7X. The 8X is 1.07m longer than its predecessor, this stretch providing an increase of some 7% cabin volume. The tri-jet also features a new, strengthened wing and provides greater fuel capacity which in turn stretches its range. The aircraft also features a strengthened landing gear and new winglets. The manufacturer also boasts that it can provide a choice of some 30 distinct cabin layouts.