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Luxaviation pulls out of EBACE and calls for change

Luxaviation, one of Europe's largest business aviation groups with a fleet of more than 250 aircraft under management, has stated publicly that it will not be exhibiting at next year's EBACE – Europe's largest corporate aviation event – which is to be held in Geneva in May 2019.

Luxaviation CEO Patrick Hansen set out what he described as “frank thoughts” in an open letter to Athar Husain Khan, Secretary General of the European Business Aviation Association (EBAA), which co-organises EBACE with the US NBAA.

With the cost of exhibition space increasing again for 2019, Hansen said the primary reason for Luxaviation's withdrawal was cost – both direct and indirect. “I can assure you that for operators, handlers, and maintenance organisations and I assume even for OEMs, it has become very expensive to participate in and exhibit at,” he said. In particular, he cited the extremely high accommodation costs in Geneva as justification for his call for the show to be moved to a less expensive city.

He called on EBAA to “use its resources, financial and operational, to support the business aviation industry in Europe and not to organise events that might be financially profitable for the EBAA but have counterproductive effects on the industry it serves.” “The time has come for EBACE to change,” concluded Hansen. “I certainly hope that more people would share their similar views with you and that this open letter could thus bring change to a passionate and value-creating niche.”

Piaggio enters receivership

One year ago Piaggio Aerospace unveiled a five-year rescue plan to safeguard its future following a cash injection of \$342 million from its parent, the Abu Dhabi-based Mubadala Investment Company. Unfortunately, on 22 November, the Italian manufacturer announced: “Despite the commitment and hard work of everyone at Piaggio Aerospace, as well as the significant financial contribution made over the years by the shareholder, the key fundamental assumptions of the restructuring plan approved in 2017 have not materialised.” Under current market conditions, it said: “the company is no longer financially sustainable.” The Piaggio board has notified the Italian government that it is “to submit the application to enter the extraordinary administration proceeding given the company's insolvency status.” Piaggio currently employs some 1,200 staff and has enjoyed considerable success with the iconic and distinctive P.180 Avanti twin turboprop, of which the Avanti Evo is the latest version.

US aircraft registry changes

The FAA reauthorisation bill, which was passed by the US Congress at the beginning of October, includes a number of measures that are designed to change the status and improve the operational efficiency of the world's largest aircraft registry. Most significant is the exclusion of the aircraft registry from a budget shutdown and resultant furlough of federal employees. This protection was included following representation from industry groups, which had claimed that the registry was “vital to protection of human life and property, and necessary for the US to fulfil its ongoing international legal obligations.” The legislation further mandates that the registry is required to become fully digitised within three years, including the submission of all information and transactions electronically.

Surf Air ceases European operations

US operator Surf Air, which specialises in ‘all you can fly’ membership services, has decided to retreat from the European market and focus on its operations in California and Nevada using a core fleet of PC-12NG aircraft. The firm launched its European operations in June 2017, initially from London Luton before transferring to London City. Charging a sign up fee and then a monthly charge of £1,750, it offered unlimited travel on a small number of scheduled semi-private routes covering Cannes and Ibiza, before later adding a Zurich link. Initially it used an Embraer Phenom 300 that was operated on its behalf by the UK's FlairJet, but then switched to using Cessna Citation Mustang aircraft under the AOC of Austrian carrier Globe Air.

Bizjet deliveries increase in Q3 2018

According to data released by the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA), overall aircraft deliveries increased by 6.1% in the first three quarters of 2018 compared to the same period in 2017. A total of 446 bizjets were handed over by the end of September, compared to 433 in the previous year – an uplift of 3%. Adding to the positive figures, pressurised turboprop deliveries numbered 184 over the three quarters – compared to 175 in the same period in 2017, a rise of 5%. On the negative side, billings fell to the end of Q3 owing to an overall reduction in the deliveries of large and super mid-size aircraft compared to 2017.

AVIATION SERVICES HUB: Aviation consultancy

Reliable, accurate and comprehensive information is a key requirement for making the right decisions in respect of owning, registering and operating an aircraft. RANA's specialist aviation consultancy service can draw upon a considerable 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 worldwide.

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 in both passenger and freight roles; 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.

Less than 50% of US fleet to meet ADS-B deadline

At the recent Corporate Jet Investor conference held in Miami, an expert panel estimated that just 46.2% of aircraft would meet the looming FAA mandate for ADS-B installation when it comes into force on 1 January 2020. With little over a year to go, just 30.3% of aircraft were compliant at the beginning of November this year according to FAA figures. There is also increasing concern that available engineering slots to instal the requisite equipment are becoming more scarce and this is leading to a corresponding increase in costs. As we have previously reported, there is a growing expectation that failure to meet the deadline will lead to the wholesale grounding of large parts of the corporate and private aircraft fleet.

European traffic continues to grow

European business aircraft traffic is continuing to grow according to the latest available data produced by Hamburg-based industry analyst WINGX Advance. October 2018 saw a total of 77,197 business aircraft departures – an increase of 5% YOY. Corporate jets undertook some 60% of this total, which represents a 4% increase on the same period last year. YTD traffic figures have increased overall by 3.2%. In terms of market strength, departures from Spain increased by 11%, Germany by 8%, both France and Switzerland by 5%, and the UK by 3%. In terms of individual airports, Paris Le Bourget recorded growth of some 13% in October – 9% YTD.

Bizav market to maintain momentum despite “headwinds”

Market momentum will continue into 2019 despite political and economic challenges, said Brian Proctor, president and CEO of Mente Group, the Dallas-based private aviation brokerage and consultancy. Speaking at the recent Corporate Jet Investor conference in Miami, Proctor cited US tax reform, keen pricing, pent-up demand for new aircraft, new aircraft entrants, and limited pre-owned inventory as “tailwinds” to build momentum. But his list of “headwinds” was longer – strong US dollar, lack of MRO availability, increased infrastructure costs, US political discourse and rising interest rates. He expected OEMs to focus on building order backlogs against a backdrop of a price recovery for both new and pre-owned aircraft.

Corporate aircraft news

Just prior to the opening of this year’s NBAA-BACE, Gulfstream Aerospace announced that it has increased the maximum cruise range of its G600 for the second time. The G600, which is expected to receive certification by the end of this year, now boasts a range of 10,186km (5,500nm) at Mach 0.90 cruise. This will allow the aircraft to fly non-stop from Los Angeles to London and means that 1,296km (700nm) has been added to the aircraft’s initial specification.

Canadian manufacturer Bombardier marked the fortieth anniversary of the first flight of its iconic Challenger 600 twinjet from the Canadair plant in Montreal on 8 November. Just under 1,100 Challenger aircraft of all marques have been produced since 1978.

The newest member of the family of Airbus Corporate Jets made its first flight on 16 November. The first successful flight of the ACJ320neo (‘new engine option’) lasted some two hours, 40 minutes from the manufacturer’s plant at Finkenwerder, near Hamburg. In addition to new, significantly more efficient engines, the A320neo also offers up to four additional centre fuel tanks along with greater cabin pressure. The first example is due for delivery to UK-based Acropolis Aviation for cabin outfitting by the end of this month.

On 26 November, Swiss manufacturer Pilatus delivered the first of its ground-breaking PC24 twin jet in air ambulance configuration. The aircraft registered VH-VWO, with a full medevac interior, was handed over to the Royal Australian Flying Doctor Service (RAFDS) at the company’s base at Stans. The RAFDS is a long-standing customer of Pilatus and currently operates 35 PC-12 turboprop singles.

The team at Sovereign’s aviation division and the worldwide Sovereign Group would like to send seasonal greetings to all readers of Airborne, as well as our best wishes for 2019



AIRCRAFT FACT FILE \ \

Saab 340



CATEGORY

Turboprop airliner

MANUFACTURER

Saab, Sweden

ENGINE

2 x GE CT7-9B turboprops

LENGTH

19.73 m

WINGSPAN

21.44 m

RANGE

1,732 km

MAX. SPEED

502 kmh

SEATING CAPACITY

36 in airline service

NO. OF CREW

2

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT (MTOW)

13,155 kg

DESCRIPTION

Retired airliners have often found new leases of life as corporate/WWIP transports. The Saab 340 regional twin turboprop is another case in point. A small number of these aircraft have been converted and serve with both corporate users and specialist operators including sports teams.

The project was originally launched as a collaboration between Swedish manufacturer Saab AB and US counterpart Fairchild Aircraft. The two companies were responsible for the production of different facets of the aircraft; Saab covered 75% of the development costs, certification and system integration; Fairchild handled the manufacture of the engine nacelles, wings and tail unit. The aircraft made its first flight on 25 January 1983 and entered service a year later. Saab took over full responsibility for the project in 1987 as Fairchild stepped away from involvement in aviation. Production of the 340 ceased in 1998 after a run of 430 units. The Saab 2000, an enlarged development of the 340, carrying up to 58 passengers, first flew in 1992.