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ROTOR: PREPPING FOR AUTONOMOUS BLACK HAWK

TECHNOLOGY: RESEARCHING AI TO 'SEE' INTO PILOT

SPEED: WILL THESE SUPERSONIC CONTENDERS FLY?

Special Report: Ready for AAM?

Catching a Rising Star

Reader Nick McMahon dazzles with this 'Best of' AIN photo of the week of his Bell 430 at dawn

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On the cover: Photo of the Week Bell 430 sunrise

Fueling the need to *fly*

- Global Fuel Savings
- FBO Branding
- SAF + Book & Claim
- Pilot Rewards
- Insurance
- Carbon Offsets

Bombardier delivers its first flagship Global 8000

BY CURT EPSTEIN

Bombardier celebrated the entry into service of its new flagship, the Global 8000, with a ceremony marking the first delivery of the ultra-long-range business jet at the company's aircraft assembly center near Toronto on December 8. The twinjet received its type certificate from Transport Canada in November; FAA and EASA approvals are pending.

Following a performance by Canadian rock musician Tom Cochrane, and in front of an audience of company employees, government officials, suppliers, media, and special guests, longtime Bombardier customer Patrick Dovigi took possession of the aircraft, which will supplant his Global 7500.

"Pride and excitement only begin to describe what the entry into service of the Global 8000 means for all 18,000 of us at Bombardier," said company president and CEO Éric Martel. "This revolutionary aircraft is redefining the business aviation landscape with its innovative design, signature smooth ride, unmatched performance, and a promise fulfilled to our customers."

First announced at EBACE 2022, the Global 8000 is now the fastest in-service civil aircraft, with an Mmo of Mach 0.95. The four-zone jet with a separate crew rest area offers an industry-leading cabin altitude of 2,691 feet at FL410 and a range of 8,000 nm, opening up more nonstop city pairs such as Singapore-to-Los Angeles.

According to Stephen McCullough, Bombardier's v-p of engineering and product development, the advanced design of the 8000's wing enables it to access a wider range of airports than expected for a private jet of its size. "We really want this aircraft to land anywhere," he explained to the audience of more than 1,000. "If you look at the magic of the wing designed here in Canada, this aircraft can land in places that small aircraft struggle."

"Today isn't just a milestone for Bombardier, it's a proud moment for Canada," added Martel, recalling the legacy of late company founder Joseph Armand Bombardier. "I doubt that he could imagine that one day his name would be connected to one of the fastest civil aviation aircraft ever built, the Global 8000, a jet that nearly breaks the sound barrier, a jet that sets a new benchmark in aviation excellence."

CURT EPSTEIN

First Global 8000 delivery marks service entry for Bombardier's new flagship business jet.

News Briefs

FLEXJET WINS APPROVAL TO START SAUDI ARABIA OPS

Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) has approved fractional ownership group Flexjet to operate flights in the country. This makes the U.S. company the second international operator—after rival VistaJet—permitted to enter the Saudi domestic market since the government introduced new rules on May 1. According to GACA, the gradual lifting of restrictions on international business aviation operators is being conducted in accordance with the country's Vision 2030 strategy for developing Saudi Arabia's aviation sector.

NETJETS INSTALLING STARLINK ON MID/LARGE BIZJET FLEET

NetJets selected SpaceX's Starlink satcom system for installation on about 600 business jets in its fleet by the end of this year. According to industry sources, Starlink installation costs, including hardware, start at about $300,000 per airplane, so the NetJets investment could represent nearly $200 million at retail prices. Starlink installations will be done on NetJets' Cessna Citation Latitudes and Longitudes, Embraer Praetor 500s, and Bombardier Challenger 350s and 650s and Globals in the U.S., as well as its Challenger 650s and Globals based in Europe.

BEYOND AERO PLANS HYDROGEN BIZJET FACTORY

French start-up Beyond Aero released plans for a factory where it will manufacture its hydrogen-electric business jet. The proposed facility will have initial capacity to produce 60 eight-seat BYA-1 aircraft annually, rising to 120 units as manufacturing ramps up. Beyond Aero expects to create 225 production jobs in a 183,000-sq-ft final assembly line, with an adjoining paint shop, R&D space, showroom, and delivery center. Several sites in Europe are being considered. The company aims to bring the BYA-1 to market in 2030.


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DAVID MCINTOSH

Comac showcased its CBJ VIP jet at the Dubai Airshow in November.

China's Comac enters the large-cabin bizjet market

BY JENNIFER MESZAROS

The Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (Comac) is seeking to break into the large-cabin VIP aircraft market with a modified version of the C909 narrowbody airliner. The state-backed airframer believes the Comac Business Jet (CBJ) will prove attractive, especially in an Asia-Pacific regional market that has long been dominated by leading Western manufacturers.

Comac's 90-seat ARJ21-700 airliner, which has since been rebranded as the C909, is the original CBJ airframe. In March 2021, the Civil Aviation Administration of China issued the aircraft's type certificate validation, almost six years after the airliner was approved. None of Comac's aircraft have achieved type certification with the FAA or EASA.

Typical CBJ cabin configurations seat between 12 and 19 passengers, but it can be fitted with up to 29 seats. Powered by a pair of General Electric CF34-10A engines, the range with eight passengers is around 2,700 nm, and the aircraft cruises at 520 knots with a certified altitude ceiling of 39,000 feet.

The CBJ has been validated to operate at high-altitude airfields such as China's Daocheng Yading Airport, the highest-elevation civil airport in the world at 14,472 feet above sea level. The twinjet's required takeoff roll is 6,722 feet.

Competing with large-cabin business jets produced by Gulfstream, Bombardier, Embraer, Dassault, Airbus, and Boeing, Comac offers several customizable configurations. What the manufacturer calls Plan A seats 15 passengers with 11 luxury seats, two couches, a pair of business-class seats, a VIP suite, two lavatories, and two crew seats. Plan B accommodates 13 passengers with six couches, five luxury seats, two business-class seats, a VIP suite, two lavatories, and one crew seat.

News Briefs

GOGO LOSES SMARTSKY LAWSUIT, PLANS TO APPEAL

A jury awarded SmartSky $22.7 million in damages for willful infringement of its patents in a lawsuit against Gogo. Both companies established air-to-ground (ATG) connectivity networks in the continental U.S. and parts of Canada. The lawsuit accused Gogo of infringing on patents surrounding beamforming handoff, unlicensed band beamforming handoff, horizon-oriented architecture, and harmonious spectrum reuse. In a statement about the jury verdict, Gogo said it disagrees with the verdict and plans to appeal it.

FAA SOLICITS VENDORS FOR ATC MODERNIZATION TECH

The FAA has released a request for information on a common automation platform (CAP) that will replace legacy equipment as it looks to modernize the U.S. air traffic control system. For the CAP, the FAA is eyeing replacements for systems including the En Route Automation Modernization and Standard Terminal Automation Replacement System with a unified, modern platform. The FAA said it "is seeking responses from vendors that can deliver the majority of the operational capability already provided today across its en route and terminal domains."

EBACE SHOW TO FEATURE NEW AIRCRAFT STATIC DISPLAY

EBAA has unveiled plans for the new format of the aircraft static display at the 2026 EBACE show. According to the association, an array of business aircraft will be presented in a new, 40,000-sq-ft location at Geneva Airport, adjoining the Palexpo facility where the event will be held from May 27 to 29. A "centralized" design will provide more of a 360-degree view of the aircraft, it said. This will allow guests to view aircraft without having to enter the static display.

The 17-passenger Plan C configuration maximizes lounge space with 12 couches, three luxury seats, two business-class seats, a VIP suite, two lavatories, and one crew seat. Plan D accommodates 18 passengers, with nine luxury seats, three couches, six business-class seats, nine lie-flat seats, a VIP suite, two lavatories, and a crew seat.

Plan E is fitted out for the highest passenger capacity (29) with 22 business-class seats, four luxury seats, three couches, two flat-available seats, a VIP suite, two lavatories, and two crew seats.

The VIP suite features a double bed and private lavatory, a reception area with lie-flat seats, and an eight-seat meeting/dining area with a satellite phone. The rear cabin area has a bar, coffee station, oven, and flight attendant seat. Sound insulation keeps noise levels as low as 55 dB in the VIP suite and below 65 dB elsewhere.

Optional phased-array broadband satcom equipment provides high-speed internet. Foldable boarding ladders enhance operational flexibility at airports without jet bridges, according to Comac.

The Chinese jet has significant foreign content onboard, beyond the U.S.-made engines. Western suppliers include Rockwell Collins (avionics), Liebherr (air management, landing gear, anti-icing, and air supply systems), Parker (fuel system, hydraulic energy systems, and actuation systems), Hamilton Sundstrand (electronics, flap and slat system, APU, and primary flight controls for rudder, elevator, aileron, and interceptor), FACC (winglets), Eaton (fuel casing system and control panel and lights control system), Kidde Aerospace (fire-protection system), and Goodrich (lighting system).

CBJ operators can benefit from the extensive technical support Comac has put in place for more than 170 C909s it has so far delivered to airlines in China and across Southeast Asia. The manufacturer also produces the larger C919 airliner, which seats up to 192 passengers, and is developing a 280-seat widebody called the C929 with intercontinental range.

Among business jet manufacturers, Gulfstream saw the strongest year-over-year growth.

GAMA: Bizjet deliveries and aircraft billings soar

BY CURT EPSTEIN

Business jet deliveries increased by more than 10% year over year during the first three quarters to 554, while turboprop and helicopter shipments declined to 409 and 612, respectively, according to the latest delivery totals from the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA). The delivery report noted that airplane billings rose by more than $2 billion to $19.4 billion, while helicopter billings increased by 16% to $3.1 billion during the first nine months of 2025.

Among business jet makers, Gulfstream saw the largest improvement. The Savannah, Georgia-based airframer handed over 24 more jets year over year, including 19 more large-cabin jets, a nearly 27% increase over the first nine months of 2024.

Embraer also saw a strong increase; the Brazilian OEM delivered 102 Phenoms and Praetors in the first three quarters, a better-than-18% jump over 2024.

Canadian manufacturer Bombardier remained steady, with four more deliveries through the first nine months of 2025 than it had a year ago, for a total of 93. Meanwhile, Textron Aviation increased its Citation shipments by three units, to 122 twinjets delivered.

Dassault Aviation only reports its deliveries twice a year. Its latest half-year report had it on par with its 2024 deliveries.

At the lighter end of the private jet spectrum, Cirrus had a 14% increase in deliveries of its single-engine Vision Jet, up from 62 in the first three quarters of 2024 to 72 this year.

Pilatus saw minor erosion, handing over three fewer PC-24s this year, while Honda Aircraft had one fewer HondaJet shipment.

In the bizliner category, Airbus delivered three Airbus Corporate Jets in the first nine months of 2025, one more than it did in the same period of 2024. Boeing, which delivered two Boeing Business Jets in the first three quarters last year, had none this year.

TURBOPROPS DIP

The turboprop segment overall experienced a decline of 6% compared with 2024, while the business turboprop class fared slightly better, with little more than a 1% decrease in deliveries through the first three quarters.

Textron Aviation led the group with a nearly 16% increase year over year, spurred by its Grand Caravan, for which the Wichita-based OEM added 19 deliveries

News Briefs

GLOBAL JET CAPITAL: BIZJET MARKET STRENGTHENS

The business jet market strengthened in the third quarter with OEM backlogs, departures, and preowned transaction volume all increasing year over year (YOY), while for-sale aircraft inventory stabilized, according to the latest Global Jet Capital (GJC) Business Aviation Market Brief. “These trends underscored the market’s stability and set the stage for continued momentum,” GJC said. Preowned sales activity also recovered from a soft second quarter and increased 16.3% YOY in the third quarter. For-sale inventory also inched down slightly to 7.6%.

UAE INVESTORS TO BUILD MORE BIZJET HANGARS IN DUBAI

UAE investment group Tariq Al Futtaim confirmed plans to build several hangars for private aircraft in the Mohammed bin Rashid Aerospace Hub at Dubai Al Maktoum International Airport (OMDW). The company said the facilities will be managed by aircraft management and charter group Empire Aviation, and the project is managed by Jet Park Investment. Project partners did not specify how many hangars will be built, what size they will be, or when they will be ready for use, but confirmed that ground support and light maintenance will be available.

AOPA JOINS BURKE LAKEFRONT AIRPORT CLOSURE BATTLE

Opposition to the city of Cleveland’s efforts to permanently shutter Burke Lakefront Airport (KBKL) is growing, with AOPA joining the fray as part of the Lakefront Airport Preservation Partnership (LAPP). Cleveland mayor Justin Bibb and Cuyahoga County executive Chris Ronayne issued a request to the federal government to relieve the city of its federal grants obligation to operate the airport. LAPP said airport improvement grants given by the FAA and the state of Ohio require KBKL to remain open until the late 2030s.

compared with the first three quarters in 2024, offsetting a nine-unit decrease among its twin-engine King Air deliveries.

Epic Aircraft, which launched its upgraded E1000 AX single earlier this year, handed over 13 of the new variant in the third quarter. Added to seven previous E1000 GX deliveries, these put Epic two aircraft above its pace set last year.

Florida-based Piper Aircraft had a more than 8% increase in deliveries this year, led by seven more M700 Furies than it handed over in the first nine months of 2024.

Pilatus Aircraft saw its delivery schedule upset by U.S. tariffs. As a result, the manufacturer had a 22% decrease in the number of single-engine turboprops handed over compared with last year, moving from 58 in the first three quarters of 2024 to 45 in the same span this year.

Daher also saw a 15% decline in deliveries of its single-engine offerings, handing over eight fewer TBM 960s than it did a year ago. Meanwhile, Piaggio delivered one twin-engine pusher Avanti Evo, one fewer than it did in the first three quarters of 2024.

ROTORCRAFT SLIDE

The overall rotorcraft market saw a 3.3% drop in deliveries in 2025, with the turbine segment posting a 3.1% decrease.

Through the first nine months of the year, Robinson Helicopters' R66 deliveries fell by nearly half, from 95 a year ago to just 50.

Earlier this year, the Torrance, California-based OEM reported supply chain difficulties, particularly with Rolls-Royce's RR300 engines. At the time, it told **AIN**, "RHC continues to assemble R66 aircraft through near completion while we await the delivery of RR300 engines."

Despite the drag on the segment's overall delivery numbers, other major rotorcraft manufacturers fared better. Airbus Helicopters improved its third-quarter 2024 total by 24 units, increasing shipments of its H125 and H160 by eight units each, and its H145 by nine units year over year.

Italian OEM Leonardo increased its overall deliveries by nine helicopters, paced by 12 more AW139s than it handed over during the first nine months of 2024.

With 11 fewer deliveries of its 505 Jet Ranger X than last year, Textron subsidiary Bell ended the first three quarters of 2025 with 91 helicopter deliveries, three fewer than the same span last year.

Sikorsky delivered a pair of large cabin S-92s this year, after handing over none through the third quarter of 2024.

"Through the first nine months of 2025, general aviation manufacturers continue to meet the demands of the industry," GAMA president and CEO James Viola told **AIN**.

Gulfstream's super-midsize G300 takes to the skies

BY CURT EPSTEIN

Gulfstream Aerospace's G300 super-midsize jet has flown for the first time, marking a major milestone in the aircraft's development. The twinjet—the successor to the company's venerable G280—was first announced at a media event in September.

As with the previous, smaller-cabin-class entries to the airframer's fleet, the G300 is manufactured in Israel by IAI under license for Gulfstream. It took off from Ben Gurion International Airport on December 5 at 8:05 a.m. local time and flew for nearly 2.5 hours, reaching a speed of Mach 0.75 and an altitude of 30,000 feet. This came after more than 2,000 hours of ground tests. Two additional test aircraft are under construction.

According to the manufacturer, the G300 offers the largest cabin in its class, seating 10 passengers. It features two living areas, a well-equipped galley, a large baggage compartment, and the lowest cabin altitude in the super-mid segment. Its range is 3,600 nm at Mach 0.80 or 3,000 nm at Mach 0.84.

"With its combination of safety, technology, performance, and cabin comfort, the G300 is a game changer for the super-midsize category," said Gulfstream president Mark Burns. "This latest investment, designed to exceed our customers' expectations for large-cabin features in a mid-cabin aircraft, brings another new category leader to our next-generation fleet."

Gulfstream's G300 made its first flight on December 5 following more than 2,000 hours of ground testing. Powered by Honeywell HTF7250G engines, the twinjet flew for 2 hours 25 minutes.

News Briefs

PRIVATE AVIATION TERMINAL TO OPEN AT DUBLIN AIRPORT

DAA has signed an agreement that transfers an Alliance Aviation general aviation terminal at Dublin Airport to the airport authority. Formalized during a recent Irish Business and General Aviation Association (IBGAA) conference, the agreement will give business and general aviation aircraft flying through the airport more convenient access to a terminal near their aircraft and screening that meets new requirements. Roy O'Driscoll, deputy general manager and head of commercial business development at DAA's Cork Airport, said the facility will open under DAA management by April.

U.S. INKS ZERO-TARIFF AIRCRAFT DEAL WITH SWISS, KOREANS

South Korea and Switzerland struck agreements with the U.S. exempting aircraft and parts from tariffs. They follow those already in place with the European Union, Canada, Mexico, and the UK, in line with the 1979 Agreement on Trade in Civil Aircraft, which provided a fair and tariff-free trade environment among 30 countries, including Korea and Switzerland. The Trump administration had imposed a 39% tariff on Switzerland, prompting Swiss airframer Pilatus to place a moratorium on its shipments to the U.S. in August, though it restarted U.S. deliveries in October.

AERO FRIEDRICHSHAFEN EXPANDS BIZAV REACH

Building off expansion into business aviation at Aero Friedrichshafen 2025, show organizers are making provisions to accommodate much more of the market sector for their next event in April. The 2025 show featured the opening of a 21,500-sq-ft business aviation dome, which will be doubled for the 2026 event. Organizers are also opening up Hall A1 to business aviation and are further shifting the dome to accommodate a larger business aircraft static display.

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Laying the foundations for eVTOL air taxi ops

BY CHARLOTTE BAILEY

Development of infrastructure for eVTOL aircraft is well underway in the UAE, among other countries.

As frontrunners in the prolonged race to certify eVTOL aircraft and bring them to market, manufacturers face growing pressure to develop operational infrastructure. Despite limited physical progress on new vertiports, this effort involves both the manufacturers themselves and ground service providers, including several from the business aviation sector.

As early 2026 dawns, Skyports Infrastructure is on track to complete what it terms "the world's first commercial vertiport." The inaugural element of its Dubai-based network is scheduled for completion in the first quarter of the year. The facility was granted regulatory approval in January 2025 and, when operational, is designed to facilitate 42,000 aircraft movements and approximately 170,000 passengers a year from two landing areas. This development will support the launch of eVTOL services in Dubai under an exclusive six-year deal with Californian eVTOL developer Joby. Plans call for operations to begin with Joby's four-passenger S4 vehicle following expected certification in 2026. However, it seems this four-story vertiport stands in contrast to other infrastructure ambitions, few of which have progressed beyond a testbed capacity.

European regulator EASA defines a vertiport as "an area of land, water, or structure used or intended to be used for the landing and takeoff of vertical takeoff and landing aircraft." Much as conventional heliports are aircraft-agnostic, vertiports are also intended to accommodate a multitude of eVTOL types (although electric charging requirements may differ). Proposed vertiport designs vary considerably: from dual-use sites leveraging existing infrastructure to purpose-built facilities. For Australian vertiport developer Skyportz, the objective is to provide "something better than a circle painted on a car park," which it says is exemplified by its recently unveiled Aeroberm design.

TESTING TIMES

Plans around eVTOL infrastructure have grown in maturity since initial demonstration projects were first proposed. Skyports, in partnership with Volocopter, unveiled what it labeled the world's first vertiport prototype in Singapore in 2019. These early iterations served both as test grounds for early aircraft concepts and as public engagement projects seeking to showcase the potential of the so-called "third aviation revolution."

There was notable progress on this front in 2022, with Urban-Air Port's three-week proof-of-concept showcase site in the UK and the inauguration of what developer UrbanV cited as "the first test vertiport in Europe." This was located at Rome's Fiumicino Airport, with UrbanV also proposing a network of vertiports (in partnership with the now-defunct Lilium) along the south of France. In the Paris area, Skyports and Groupe ADP launched a European vertiport terminal testbed.

Although the subsequent years have seen many aircraft manufacturers successfully perform demonstration flights on continents worldwide, the technical feasibility of these flights has often operated independently from future commercial considerations. However, passenger ecosystem expectations are being considered by "living lab" projects. Skyports is engaging with both Joby and Vertical Aerospace in operational trials on such ventures, with the latter having completed a demonstration vertiport at an existing general aviation airfield in the UK.

The 2025 Osaka World Expo in Japan also saw demonstration flights from OEMs, including SkyDrive, conducted from the Osakako vertiport. "Throughout the Expo 2025 program, Osaka Metro hopes to promote wider recognition of the word 'vertiport' as a term for describing an eVTOL takeoff and landing site," wrote the project partner.

Moving out of the sandbox towards real-world missions, the potential of extending the operational expertise, preexisting infrastructure, and regulatory approvals of existing heliports also brings benefits to the advanced air mobility sector. Archer Aviation's Abu Dhabi network of vertiport proposals includes Zayed Port's Cruise Terminal, the only site to date with published design approval from the region's aviation regulator, which it received in April 2025.

"Once complete, this location is targeted to be the first hybrid heliport available for commercial air taxi operations in Dubai," Archer said in a recent announcement. The company's CEO and co-founder, Adam Goldstein, added that "leveraging existing aviation assets is a cornerstone of our launch strategy. It allows us to move both quickly and safely." At the time, Archer and its partners stated they plan to add charging infrastructure and upgrade landing and safety systems in the second half of 2025.

Other hybrid examples include Skyports Infrastructure's acquisition of the former Falcon Heliport in the UK capital (now Skyports London Heliport), alongside the rebranding in April 2025 of the former Downtown Manhattan Heliport to Downtown Skyport. In the same month, its joint owner-operators Skyports Infrastructure and Groupe ADP said electrification provision was expected to start later this year. However, it is unclear how many of these dual-use sites are actually ready to accommodate eVTOL aircraft.

FAA LAYS THE GROUND RULES

Nevertheless, the revised engineering brief issued by the FAA in January 2025 is helping provide some clarity on vertiport design standards. Importantly, this included the classification of a vertiport as a "type of heliport that [the FAA is] optimizing for the needs of powered-lift aircraft and special class rotorcraft with three or more propulsors."

Robert Bassey, an engineer with the FAA Airports Design and Construction Branch and author of the brief, explained that this differentiation was significant because "this new class of aircraft with three or more propulsors requires, at a kind of overarching philosophical level, a different type of infrastructure." He concluded that the brief "will allow state and local jurisdictions to leverage existing infrastructure requirements with minimal changes."

"The FAA will develop a performance-based advisory circular on vertiport design in the future, as additional performance data is gleaned about these emerging VTOL aircraft," declared the U.S. regulator in December 2024.

Collaboration with existing FBOs also offers opportunities to eVTOL operations. "We anticipate that electric aircraft of all types, including eVTOLs, will be operated alongside our existing business aircraft operations," a Signature Aviation representative told **AIN** in August, adding that the timing and nature of those operations are still to be determined.

"As the world's largest network of private aviation terminals, Signature's forward-leaning approach to aviation modernization aligns with our vision," added Dan Dalton, Wisk Aero's v-p of commercial partnerships. Atlantic Aviation's January 2025 acquisition of Ferrovial Vertiports will also leverage the former's U.S. operational expertise. "We see tremendous long-term benefits and growth in building out infrastructure to support the advanced air mobility space," added Atlantic Aviation CEO Jeff Foland.

Archer Aviation has taken over the master lease at Hawthorne Airport near Los Angeles.

In the business aviation sector, other FBO groups, including Clay Lacy, have declared ambitions to support eVTOL air taxi operators. Clay Lacy has projects on the drawing board in California, Florida, and the New York City area.

CLEAN-SHEET CONCEPTS

Alongside upgrading existing infrastructure, new-build projects are also seeking to integrate eVTOLs alongside conventional fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft. In November 2025, Falcon Executive Aviation announced plans for a "new fully private multi-modal FBO terminal in Dubai," something it described as being "designed from the ground up to become the city's primary hub for helicopter services and future eVTOL operations."

As the final push towards type certification continues, it's not yet clear when commercial eVTOL services (outside of mainland China, with its domestically developed EHang EH216-S) will commence in the U.S. or the Middle East. Speaking before the Dubai Airshow in November, Didier Papadopoulos, Joby's president of aircraft OEM, clarified that Joby was "not necessarily getting a type certificate [in the UAE] before [certification work is complete with] the FAA." He added: "Our intent is to get approval for specific operations in Dubai."

Vertiport networks planned for the region include three further Dubai sites for Joby, alongside its 60% completed flagship facility. Abu Dhabi Airports and Skyports have confirmed two initial vertiport sites at existing airports, which the latter says are already under construction.

More than 10 sites are planned in total. Skyports is also working with Abu Dhabi-based drone company Lodd Autonomous for a vertiport in Abu Dhabi, "and beyond," while Falcon Aviation is teaming with Archer to jointly develop a network spanning the Falcon Heliport, Dubai's Palm, and Abu Dhabi's Marina Mall Heliport.

Abu Dhabi government-owned Autocraft is also planning to start flying Chinese company TCab Tech's E20+ aircraft in the coming months. Speaking in November, K2 v-p of strategy Waleed Alblooshi described the region as well-suited to eVTOL operations. "It's the government, it's the regulatory authorities," he offered. "Here in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, you make things go fast—that's why all the companies want to start their operations here."

In the U.S, OEMs and their partners have been prolific in announcing similar networks of proposed vertiports, with California being a notable hotspot for locally-based Archer and Joby. The Global Air Mobility AAM-UAM market report, published in July 2025, revealed that North America has plans to develop eVTOL air services in 29 states.

Following its appointment as the "official air taxi provider" of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games, Archer has signed contracts to acquire the lease on the nearby Hawthorne Airport for $126 million. The company said this will "serve as its operational hub" for the games, while also providing the foundation for wider air taxi plans across the sprawling metropolis.

Again, it's not clear how soon this facility could be eVTOL-operational, with timelines for many vertiport ventures now appearing to take a slightly less imminent approach. Although Orlando International Airport is soliciting a developer for a potential vertiport site, this isn't intended to be in use until 2028. In Indonesia, Nasantara Capital City Authority's plans for the development of a new capital city include eVTOL aspects.

LONG-TERM USE CASES

The wide-reaching applications of potential eVTOL missions have led to some creative planning, including suggested installations at existing airports, beachfront resorts, universities, and even hospitals.

EASA said "to realize fully the potential of urban air mobility, vertiports need to be easily accessible, with good connecting services to streets, railway stations, buses, etc." For now, with the exception of electrified preexisting heliports, standalone city-center vertiports are notably lacking.

In Brazil, Eve Air Mobility is partnering with infrastructure specialists PRS Aeroportos and VertiMob Infrastructure to consider vertiport operation concepts, illustrated by a vertiport facility atop a shopping mall.

Although this 24-month sandbox exercise will not involve any actual flying, city-center operations could become plausible as aircraft operational maturity and airspace considerations evolve.

A mall in Brazil features in Eve Air Mobility's vertiport operations concepts.

FAA BVLOS framework approaches finish line

BY HANNEKE WEITERING

Reliable Robotics has flown its remotely piloted Cessna Caravan with no crew on board.

With the FAA now deep in its review of public comments on the agency's long-anticipated proposal to allow routine beyond-visual-line-of-sight (BVLOS) operations in U.S. airspace, 2026 is poised to be a pivotal year for the drone industry and the aviation sector at large. Designed to enable scaled drone operations, the new rulemaking could be finalized by the end of the first quarter.

If approved, it could shape up to be the most consequential policy shift for drones in the U.S. since 2016, when the FAA implemented its first operating requirements for commercial uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) weighing up to 55 pounds. That so-called "small UAS rule," established in 14 CFR Part 107, enabled daylight-only flights within visual line of sight, with limited BVLOS operations permitted under waivers and exemptions. Under the FAA's newly proposed rules, operators would no longer need waivers or exemptions to conduct routine BVLOS flights below 400 feet agl with UAS weighing up to 1,320 pounds.

The FAA's notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM), drafted in collaboration with the Transportation Security Administration and published in the Federal Register in August, aims to replace the cumbersome waiver-based approval system with a unified, risk-based approach to determining what UAS can safely operate in the National Airspace System.

According to the FAA, the rule is intended to provide "a predictable and clear pathway for safe, routine, and scalable UAS operations that include package delivery, agriculture, aerial surveying, civic interest, operations training, demonstration, recreation, and flight testing."

In the NPRM, the FAA proposes adding two new sections in Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR): Part 108, which defines operational requirements for uncrewed aircraft, and Part 146, which establishes rules for third-party services that enable and support BVLOS operations. Specifically, it introduces a certification pathway for automated data service providers and uncrewed air traffic management services.

More than 3,000 comments were submitted in response to the NPRM, which was open for public comment through October 6. It drew responses from stakeholders across the nation's aviation landscape, including various OEMs, operators, and service providers, as well as major industry associations.

PART 146: A QUIET DISRUPTOR

While the proposed Part 108 rules garnered the bulk of the feedback during the public comment period, Part 146 has not sparked as intense a public discussion. However, some argue that Part 146 will have a more profound impact on the National Airspace System (NAS), with implications reaching far beyond Part 108 operations.

Under current regulations, an automated data service provider (ADSP) can only provide services to UAS operators after obtaining a letter of acceptance from the FAA for specific waivers or exemptions; there is no certification process. Part 146 would recognize ADSPs as certificated entities that form a core component of the NAS—and it would eliminate the need for yet more FAA waivers.

"Waivers, exemptions, and other authorizations...have safely enabled numerous BVLOS operations including infrastructure inspection, package delivery, and surveillance," the FAA wrote in its NPRM. "These operational advancements have occurred within the existing aviation regulatory framework, one that did not imagine the types of technologies that could, at a minimum, replace the human eye or that could coordinate operations through decentralized automation platforms."

Ultimately, the Part 146 rule could support the introduction of larger and more complex UAS, such as the autonomous Cessna Grand Caravans and other modified legacy aircraft in development at companies including Reliable Robotics, Merlin, and Joby Aviation's Xwing subsidiary.

"That point cannot be overstated," the Northern Plains UAS Test Site commented. "Part 146 is not the segregation of manned and unmanned aviation—it's the bridge. It acknowledges that the same infrastructure supporting BVLOS today could evolve to support tomorrow's crewed operations. Professional aviators already see this need: safety services like conformance monitoring and deconfliction services are not 'UAS-only' tools. They are scalable functions that, under a proper regulatory framework, enhance NAS safety for everyone."

Electronic conspicuity devices could enable crewed aircraft to retain right of way over uncrewed aircraft.

While large UAS may not qualify for Part 108 operations, "there are a lot of things in Part 108 that are actually really helpful to integrating these types of technologies into the NAS," Scott O'Brien, vice president of legislative affairs at Reliable Robotics, told **AIN**. Reliable Robotics is already flight-testing remotely piloted and highly autonomous Cessna Caravans it developed with backing from the U.S. Air Force.

Last year, the California-based company won an FAA contract to execute data-collection flights with its detect-and-avoid (DAA) system.

In its comments on the NPRM, Reliable Robotics stressed the importance of Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) Out equipment, which, under Part 108 rules, would grant an aircraft right-of-way over small UAS.

"If you're operating a non-UAS or even a large UAS like our aircraft that has ADS-B Out, having right of way over the small UAS is really important, so we want to expand ADS-B Out equipage to more aircraft," O'Brien said. He added that regulators could do more to promote and accelerate ADS-B Out equipage, like providing rebates as incentives, for example.

ELECTRONIC CONSPICUITY GIVES RIGHT OF WAY

Part 108 UAS would not be allowed to use ADS-B Out equipment to broadcast their positions under the FAA's proposed rule. That's because the FAA is concerned that too many transmitters could potentially oversaturate available ADS-B frequencies, limiting the system's capabilities and potentially blinding ADS-B ground receivers.

As a workaround for ADS-B limitations, the FAA said it "plans to define new requirements for a portable low-cost electronic conspicuity device that could be used by manned aviation operators solely to retain right of way" over Part 108 UAS.

Under the FAA's proposed rulemaking, UAS operating under the proposed Part 108 rules would have to yield right of way to crewed aircraft that are broadcasting their position using ADS-B Out equipment or the aforementioned electronic conspicuity device. Meanwhile, crewed aircraft

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BY TEXTRON AVIATION

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Speaking of additional comfort, the new Citation Ascend™ features a flat floor, allowing passengers to comfortably maximize their legroom throughout the flight. For operators who prefer the traditional sunken aisle design, it can be selected as a no-cost option.

Another highlight of the Citation Ascend™ updated cabin is the larger side windows, which let in more natural lighting, further enhancing each passenger’s overall travel experience.

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Many current and prospective Citation® operators suggested that new aircraft have more performance and efficiency. Again, the Citation Ascend™ steps up with new-generation Pratt & Whitney® Canada PW545D engines, which deliver increased thrust, greater fuel efficiency and longer on-wing times. These material updates within the engine, changes within Full Authority Digital Engine Controls (FADEC), the addition of Pratt & Whitney® Canada’s FAST box, and other improvements, provide increased efficiency and operational ease.

In fact, thanks to the overall boost in engine performance, the new Citation Ascend™ can carry four passengers up to 1,940 nautical miles at max cruise speed, enabling more city pairs than previously possible.

Speaking of enhanced capabilities, another first for the Citation Ascend™ is the unattended Honeywell® auxiliary power unit (APU), which can keep the cabin cool in summer and comfy in winter, without relying on external power.

LONGER MAINTENANCE INTERVALS ENSURE YOUR ASCEND IS READY TO GO WHEN YOU ARE.

The Cessna® Citation® family is legendary in its reliability. Yet the new Citation Ascend™ has been designed to deliver even greater uptime through a significant increase in both airframe and engine inspections, as well as maintenance intervals.

For example, the hot section and TBO intervals on the Pratt & Whitney® Canada PW545D engines are 3,000 and 6,000 hours respectively, while airframe intervals are now 18 months and 800 hours.

To further increase Citation Ascend's™ uptime, overall reliability is also enhanced by Textron Aviation's maintenance diagnostics systems, including the in-flight transmission of diagnostics via LinxUs®.

The Citation Ascend's™ diagnostic systems include both in-flight notification of anomalies, which provide the maintenance crew with advanced notifications, as well as the ability to record over 9,000 operating parameters, which support quick troubleshooting. Recorded data is transmitted via LTE, satellite, or Wi-Fi to LinxUs®, where the data can be accessed for advanced troubleshooting and condition monitoring.

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Cessna
BY TEXTRON AVIATION

that aren't broadcasting their positions would be required to yield to UAS—a provision that sparked consternation and debate across the industry.

Hot air balloon operators were prominent among the many commenters who voiced concerns with the right-of-way provision. Several commercial LTA pilots pointed out that it would require balloon operators to yield to drones—even though balloons cannot maneuver as quickly as powered drones—unless their balloons are equipped with electronic conspicuity devices, a nonexistent technology that adds cost and weight to their operations.

"It is neither reasonable nor responsible for the FAA to impose a regulatory requirement that hinges on technology which does not yet exist, has not been tested, and is not ready for deployment," one commenter said, adding that the FAA should retain its existing right-of-way rules for crewed aircraft operating below 400 feet "until reliable, tested, and universally available technology exists to ensure safety."

In a joint statement, a group of general aviation and business aviation stakeholders, including the Balloon Federation of America, as well as the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, Vertical Aviation International (VAI), National Air Transportation Association, and Experimental Aircraft Association, expressed concern that the FAA's rulemaking as written "may contribute to unintended consequences for the NAS." They called for the FAA to extend right of way to crewed aircraft in all airspace while requiring BVLOS drone operators to detect and avoid them.

VAI separately claimed that the FAA's proposed rule "relies on inaccurate assumptions about the low-altitude environment, proposes significant changes to long-standing right-of-way rules, and risks creating unnecessary hazards in the airspace."

"Right-of-way rules must continue to protect the least maneuverable aircraft," VAI commented, adding that aircraft with people on board "should retain precedence over UAS within the right-of-way hierarchy," which is established in 14 CFR 91.113.

Joby demonstrated autonomous cargo operations during the U.S. Air Force's Agile Flag 24-3 exercise using a Cessna 208B equipped with Xwing autonomy technology.

DETECT AND AVOID

If the FAA were to implement Part 108 rules as proposed, existing Part 91 general operating and flight rules would need to be amended to reflect changes to long-established right-of-way procedures. Whereas Part 91 relies on "see-and-avoid," or human visual observation, Part 108 adds a new reliance on DAA technologies that don't jibe with the existing rules.

"Modernizing this 91.113 regulation to basically allow an approved electronic means of detect-and-avoid is really something that is important to do now," O'Brien said. Reliable Robotics is among a handful of companies developing DAA technologies for autonomous aircraft, while others are developing ground-based optical DAA systems to improve situational awareness.

O'Brien explained that the company could, in principle, still certify and operate its large autonomous UAS under special conditions or waivers, "but to streamline things and just be more forward-leaning on innovation, using the NPRM as an opportunity to update that regulation to be inclusive of these electronic DAA capabilities, that's something that we [suggested] in the comments. And I think that's hopefully something that could come out and expand the regulation a bit, making it more inclusive of large UAS."

For operations under Part 108 rules near Class B and C airspace, where crewed aircraft flying at low altitudes near airports pose a higher collision risk, the FAA proposes that UAS should be required to have a DAA system like Reliable's. Those UAS would have to detect and avoid crewed aircraft that are not broadcasting their position via ADS-B or electronic conspicuity device.

The same rules apply to operations in highly populated areas. "At this level of ground risk, the [DAA] system would need to be agnostic to the intruder aircraft's equipage and would need to detect all airborne aircraft," the FAA said.

Over the coming months, the FAA will be analyzing comments and updating its proposed rules. A final draft of the document could be issued before the second quarter. Under an executive order signed into law by President Trump on June 6, the FAA was given 240 days to publish its final rule, suggesting a deadline of February 1. However, agency-wide delays stemming from a record-setting 43-day government shutdown in October and November could push the final ruling into March or April.

U.S. AAM advocates call for more regulatory clarity

BY KERRY LYNCH

Beta is looking at a phased entrance into the AAM market, starting with a conventional takeoff and landing electric airplane.

As eVTOL developers edge closer to operational approval, U.S. lawmakers and stakeholders alike stress the need for regulatory clarity and consistency and close collaboration between Congress, the FAA, the industry, and the states to ensure a safe transition for advanced air mobility (AAM).

That message was threaded through a recent hearing the House of Representatives aviation subcommittee held on the state of the AAM industry that signaled Congress intends to remain actively watchful of the transition. During the hearing on December 3, lawmakers also emphasized that the recent shutdown underscores the need for consistent funding to support this transition.

House aviation subcommittee chairman Troy Nehls (R-Texas) noted the benefits of AAM, including the ability to reach rural and urban locations not previously served by traditional aviation, and pointed to an industry report projecting the market would reach $115 billion annually by 2035 and generate 280,000 jobs. However, he cautioned, "There's only one issue: No one has a type certificated aircraft yet. We just don't have it done."

TROY NEHLS (R-TEXAS)
HOUSE AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Congress has recognized the importance of the emerging technology, Nehls said, noting that the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 included a subtitle dedicated to its advancement. One of the requirements was that the FAA publish enabling regulations, including the special federal aviation regulation (SFAR) regarding powered lift. In the year since that SFAR publication, he queried about the utility of the regulations and the challenges still facing

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manufacturers to cross the finish line for getting new aircraft into service.

Nehls also noted promising actions such as the establishment this year of the eVTOL Integration Pilot Program (eIPP)—a public/private program spearheaded by the FAA to facilitate the safe integration of AAM into the National Airspace System (NAS) by gathering data on real-world operations—saying it will help continue to pave the way for the sector.

And while much discussion has centered on air traffic modernization, Nehls said any steps taken on the future of the ATC system should take into consideration all current and future uses of the NAS, including AAM.

Aviation subcommittee ranking member Andre Carson (D-Indiana) agreed on the societal and economic benefits of the sector. "This advanced technology has the potential to improve mobility options, particularly in dense urban environments like Indianapolis; boost local businesses and job opportunities; and reduce surface congestion," he said. "But to make this vision a reality, we must ensure all stakeholders, including labor, state governments, and impacted local communities and legacy airspace users, remain at the table."

The hearing heard some skepticism too about the value of government involvement in the development of AAM. Rep. Scott Perry (R-Pennsylvania) pushed back against calls for more federal funding for programs.

"Our taxpayers, I don't think, want to pay for electric charging stations for these vehicles until they are operational," Perry commented. "If this is really great, investors who can make money will pay into this. I don't want to prioritize concepts over concrete."

SAFETY FIRST

Carson cautioned that the administration and the AAM industry "must clearly demonstrate that these innovations can safely operate without placing additional strain on the system and our entire aviation workforce."

ANDRE CARSON (D-INDIANA)
AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE RANKING MEMBER

This is a critical reason why the FAA must remain robustly funded, he continued. "The recent 43-day government shutdown, the longest in our nation's history, had a very significant consequence for U.S. aviation and is a very stark reminder of what is at stake if the FAA is made into a political pawn," Carson said. "A government shutdown should never affect our air travel or [cause] the FAA's very talented workforce to go without pay the way it did earlier last month."

Carson added that this is why the bipartisan subcommittee leadership, alongside the full House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee leadership, offered legislation that would ensure that the agency can continue its work and tap into funding during any future government shutdown.

"The safe deployment of AAM into U.S. airspace relies on a very resilient and modernized infrastructure, whether that's physical ground infrastructure like vertiports for eVTOLS or the digital collision avoidance systems that air traffic controllers need to efficiently manage these new airspace users," he said.

Noting that Congress provided $12.5 billion to revamp the nation's air traffic control system, he also emphasized that the administration and industry must consider how new entrants will be safely integrated into an already very busy U.S. airspace.

In addition, Carson added, the AAM industry and the FAA must work with

Boeing's Wisk Aero is developing an autonomous and pilotless eVTOL air taxi for BVLOS operations.

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state governments to ensure communities have the resources and guidance they need to develop and deploy the necessary infrastructure.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN DISRUPTION

Pointing to the shutdown as well as the major accidents that occurred this year, Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Washington), the ranking member for the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, stated: "The current state of the broader system looks much different than when this subcommittee last met six months ago...We have to avoid history repeating itself." This underscores the need for the Aviation Funding Solvency Act to continue the agency's operations, with pay, during shutdowns, he agreed.

Noting that the committee first explored the safe integration of new entrants, including AAM, nearly a decade ago, Larsen said, "What was once considered an aviation technology of the distant future is happening now. While the potential applications of AAM from cargo transport to passenger air taxi service are promising, we always have to prioritize safety."

Larsen believes the SFAR creates the necessary regulatory framework to enable AAM operations to safely scale, but added, "Though certification is the main goal for many stakeholders, it cannot be the only objective. The successful adoption of these technologies depends on community acceptance and the state's ability to prepare for future operations."

The FAA must have early, transparent, and meaningful engagement with states and local communities to ensure their priorities and concerns are addressed, he agreed.

CLEARING BLOCKS

As for steps needed to become operational, Vermont-based Beta Technologies founder and CEO Kyle Clark said government, working with stakeholders, must "unblock this industry with clear and unmoving goalposts and allow the use of tools at its disposal to get through type certification."

As the others had, Clark highlighted the benefits of the AAM sector, saying it will "fortify America's industrial base," and maintained, "We've got all of the things in place to do this."

He outlined the "step-wise" approach that Beta is taking to entry into service. "We've gone into this industry slightly differently than the balance. We are focused on moving cargo medical logistics, things first, and then moving into urban air mobility."

RICK LARSEN (D-WASHINGTON)
RANKING MEMBER, T&I COMMITTEE

Cargo medical logistics, he maintained, is a great, low-risk, easy application to start with before going to urban air mobility. "The infrastructure exists today to do this, and by increasing these transportation options, I think we can ensure that every community can benefit from these technologies."

Clark stressed the importance of safety at the core of the company: "Everybody at Beta is either a pilot or becoming a pilot." Beta has some 1,000 people at its Vermont headquarters now, he mentioned, and has begun to obtain certifications on parts of its initial aircraft.

The company is planning multiple vehicles, beginning with a more conventional takeoff and landing all-electric Alia CX300, which can carry six people or 200 cu ft of cargo and is being certified under Part 23. Beta has a backlog for 331, 131 of which are firm. Next up is its Alia eVTOL, which is being certified under Part 21.17(b) and has a backlog of 158 orders and 402 options. Other larger and military versions are in the offing as well.

"This approach recognizes the readiness and the regulatory framework today to incorporate this technology, in a thoughtful, safe, and methodical way," he said, noting that Beta has flown more than 100,000 miles in its electric aircraft to more than 380 airports domestically and flown in 10 different countries, including opening the Paris Air Show.

Clark added that the company is among those that are "heavily energized and invested in the eIPP," believing this will allow the company to launch domestic applications and operations as early as next summer. "We need to stay on track there to get this done. What happened in the drone industry, I don't think we can let happen in the eVTOL industry. The technology is here. We need the FAA to show up with us to make sure that these things get deployed."

Maintaining electric aviation is "fundamentally safer" than legacy aviation, he added. "We're not asking for this process to be easy. We're just asking for the goalposts to stay steady, for people to show up and be accountable, and for the FAA to meet their compulsory timelines that we believe should be in place for responses to things when we produce statistically relevant datasets."

AUTONOMOUS FLIGHT RULES NEEDED

Wisk Aero CFO Tyler Painter expressed confidence that investments in the industry are laying a foundation to lead on AAM, but cautioned that for this to happen, "We must also prioritize the development of a regulatory framework to enable autonomy."

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The Boeing subsidiary is working to certify its Gen 6 autonomous passenger-carrying air taxi. "Safety is at the core of everything that we do," Painter insisted. "Our learnings over the last 15 years and six generations of aircraft will culminate in the safe integration of our Gen 6 aircraft into the national airspace system."

TYLER PAINTER
CFO, WISK AERO

He further stressed that autonomy is not a new or radical advancement in aviation, but an evolution of what already exists today. "Increasing levels of autonomy have and will continue to improve safety. Most functions on commercial aircraft involve automation today."

Painter explained that human oversight will remain critical and that, for Wisk aircraft, remote crew members will supervise and communicate with air traffic control as the company's aircraft initially operate on predetermined routes. "This approach will ensure predictability and safe integration of our aircraft into today's airspace."

The company has partnered with Sugar Land, Texas, to identify and assess locations for vertiports and potential training and maintenance facilities at Sugar Land Regional Airport. This will serve as a gateway to a larger network in the greater Houston area.

Painter praised the willingness of FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy to work with industry and chart regulatory pathways for new technologies, calling this support crucial. He echoed the need to modernize the NAS for existing and future operations and "futureproof it for autonomous operations."

Robert Rose, CEO and co-founder of Reliable Robotics, predicted that "autonomy is going to be one of the most important technology advancements for the United States this century" and stated the industry must drive forward on such safety-enhancing technology.

Reliable Robotics has become a key partner in the autonomy field since its founding in 2017. Rose noted that it now has more than 150 employees in 23 states. "We started Reliable Robotics because of the importance of this technology to the future of the United States for both our long-term economic security but also our national security," he said.

Rose called safety a "team sport" and praised the FAA's collaboration. "It's because of this unique public-private partnership that we have in aviation that we're able to move aviation safety forward," he said.

STATES STEP UP

Tying all of this together will be the individual states, Greg Pecoraro, president and CEO of the National Association of State Aviation Officials, said. "Thousands of airports in and around communities are well-positioned to benefit from AAM operations. States will be essential for AAM operations through many functions that draw on local and regional expertise that federal authorities cannot replicate."

But aligning policy, planning, and infrastructure is essential to providing clarity on how to operate and what to expect across the different states, Pecoraro added. "Policy harmonization between states and relevant standards entities is vital for cohesive governance and successful integration of AAM. While the FAA continues its preemptive role in AAM integration, federal-state coordination is critical to successful integration."

Several states have begun preparing for AAM operations, including creating task forces and preparing guidance or operational test sites. But Pecoraro called on Congress and the FAA to establish a formal working group with state and federal officials to work collaboratively on integration.

Reliable Robotics has flown dozens of unpiloted flights in this modified Cessna Caravan.

Textron Aviation workforce initiatives paying dividends

BY KERRY LYNCH

Textron Aviation is seeing early successes through several workforce training initiatives—from its new career center to its veterans' programs—as it continues its hiring at a rate of about 100 employees a month, company executives say.

The cornerstone of its workforce training initiative is the new $40 million Career & Learning Center that had a soft opening last year and a formal dedication in April with dignitaries such as Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly and Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kansas). That facility, on the east side of Wichita at its campus where the Beechcraft product line is produced, was transformed from a parts warehouse into a multipurpose recruitment, pre-employment, and training center.

Trainees get hands-on experience at the Textron Career & Learning Center Learning Zone.

"This is a big deal to us," said Textron Aviation president and CEO Ron Draper. "It's a 100,000-sq-ft facility dedicated to recruiting new employees, hiring, putting them through all the pre-employment checks, and then on the day they start, they go through orientation there."

The center encompasses a classroom setting and a simulated factory. "They're not just learning in a classroom; they're going out and working on a fuselage, a wing, or whatever their job classification is, and even if they have no skill, they're probably getting eight to 10 weeks of training and building confidence before they report to their first job," he said.

Hundreds have already gone through the center, and Draper said the difference is notable. Before, a new hire may get two to three weeks of training, and then they are sent for on-the-job training where they are paired with a senior employee and a supervisor, with instructors who may float among the various factories.

As far as the training, the instructors are longtime employees with substantial experience behind them, Draper explained. "They've taken ownership of the process to say it's my job to ensure that these folks are well trained. So, we're excited about that."

But Textron Aviation is continuing to refine the process. "We're just looking at how do we improve it," he said. About 80% to 90% of its job classifications now go through the process. Textron Aviation hopes to have 100%, whether in maintenance, production, or the executive suite, process through the center.

The Career & Learning Center is divided into four different zones to support applicants and employees in their hiring and training journeys.

Unique about the center is that it is open to the public. Any person interested in a job can walk in during its public operating hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays with extended hours until 6 p.m.), said Jennifer Whitfield, director of human resources, talent development, and professional training. Potential applicants would walk into the first of four zones at the center: the Career Zone. There, they could apply for a job, obtain help with a resume, or maybe even have an interview at the time, Whitfield said.

Next is the Pre-Employment Zone, which involves onboarding activities such as any necessary pre-employment testing and orientation for new hires. A third area is what Textron Aviation calls a Learning Zone. This encompasses professional and technical training rooms to provide classroom and hands-on learning. The west bay hangar was turned into a simulated manufacturing floor, enabling training on production and other skills.

The final "Design. Build. Fly." Zone is public-facing—a space dedicated to bringing in students from kindergarten up through 12th grade with age-appropriate activities to introduce them to aviation and STEM. Among the activities is a Cessna Skyhawk 172 simulator.

continues on page 56 ›

Best of **AIN**alerts

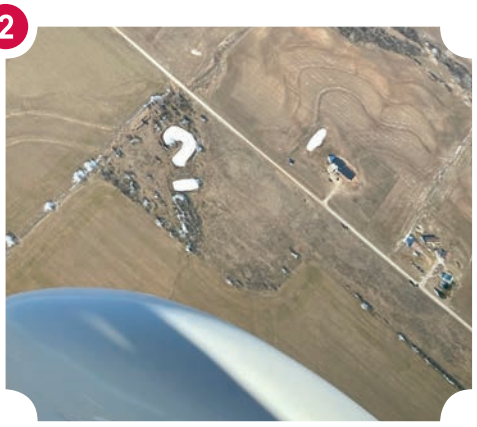
Photos of the Week

Throughout the year, our AINalerts newsletter readers have submitted many interesting and eye-catching pictures for the Friday Photo of the Week feature. Here's a sampling of the ones we've published. Our thanks to everyone who has contributed photos. Keep them coming!

1

1. Relentless in Alaska. The Bell 525 Relentless arrives at Juneau, Alaska, for icing and cold-weather trials during its flight-test campaign. The super-medium twin helicopter is expected to receive FAA certification shortly. Thanks to Bell engineering test pilot Barbara Lewis for sharing this one!

2



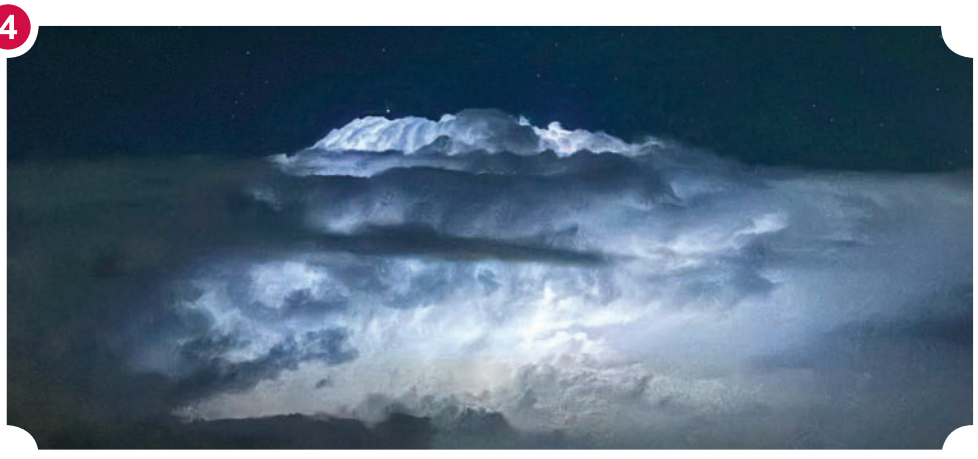
2. What? Do not adjust your screen, and this is not an AI photo or manipulated with Photoshop. Textron Aviation demo pilot William Ott captured this image of a frozen lake in the shape of a question mark while flying a Cessna piston just north of Ponca City, Oklahoma.

3

3. Time for some sleep. To celebrate World Sleep Day, Luxaviation UK's George Galanopoulos read "Biggin's Bedtime Story" to Captain Mary, who along with Captain Merlin are the mascots for London Biggin Hill Airport. The story recounts Captain Mary's smooth arrival at Biggin Hill before retiring at The Landing, the airport's 56-room, on-site hotel.

4. Flying above the weather. Aviation oxygen systems expert Jim Stabile sent along this photo somewhere over Mississippi at 22,000 feet on a flight from Dallas/Fort Worth (KDFW) to Mississippi's Greenville Mid-Delta Airport (KGLH). We love the juxtaposition of the thunderstorm clouds below with the starry night sky above.

4



5

5. Buzz at Biggin Hill. London Biggin Hill Airport is "buzzing" about its latest airport tenant: an active hive with about 30,000 bees. The airport is working with the Orpington Beekeepers Association, which is guiding Colin Hitchins, Biggin Hill's head of sustainability, through the process of establishing its first apiary and helping ensure the health and wellbeing of its growing bee colonies. Honey collected from the hive will be used at the airport's community cafe, The Lookout, and on-site hotel, The Landing. Biggin Hill hopes to establish additional hives in the future.

6

6. Deice ice, baby. This Prince Aviation crew had to complete the mission, and in aviation there is no wishin'; so there was no playing, and they had the deicers spraying (apologies in advance to Vanilla Ice). Thanks to Vladimir Jovanovic—executive director at the Serbia-based air charter, maintenance, and training firm—for sharing this photo of his company's Dassault Falcon 2000LXS being deiced before taxi out.

7

7. Peak performance. Markus Kühn, one of the certifying staff at Textron Aviation's Düsseldorf service center, sent along this image of a Cessna Citation CJ4 Gen2 at Shizuoka Airport (RJNS) in Japan. The airport is famous for its proximity to Mt. Fuji, which is the tallest peak in Japan at 12,388 feet.

8

8. Tug harder! FBO Overland Aviation at North Dakota's Williston Basin International Airport (KXWA) partnered with the airport to raise $20,000 for Make-A-Wish North Dakota at the inaugural Williston Plane Pull and Fly-In Movie event. The day's activities kicked off with a plane pull, with six teams competing to move a Sun Country Airlines Boeing 737 one hundred feet across the tarmac via tug rope. Afterwards, attendees gathered inside Overland Aviation's hangar for family activities, treats, and a screening of Disney's "Planes" movie. Thanks to Avfuel for sharing this photo.

If you'd like to submit an entry for Photo of the Week, email a high-resolution horizontal image (at least 2000 x 1200 pixels), along with your name, contact information, social media names, and info about it (including brief description, location, etc.) to photos@ainonline.com. Tail numbers can be removed upon request. Those submitting photos give **AIN** implied consent to publish them in its publications and social media channels.

Supersonic bizjets: A sound investment?

BY CHARLOTTE BAILEY

Boom Supersonic's XB-1 demonstrated "boomless cruise" in early 2025, breaking the sound barrier six times with no ground noise.

Advocates of business aviation have long valued its unique ability to save time, expediting travel and facilitating quicker connections. But as aircraft have become incrementally faster, no supersonic business jet (SSBJ) concept has yet made it to market, despite attention from established OEMs and various start-ups over the last four decades. Although breaking the sound barrier may be technically feasible, a limited commercial market for such aircraft—hindered by existing regulatory restrictions—has resulted in an as-yet-unbroken barrier.

To date, only two civil aircraft have operated in commercial service faster than the speed of sound: the British Aircraft Corporation Concorde and the Tupolev Tu-144 (the latter operated only on a single Moscow-to-Kazakhstan route). Concorde's commercial service was curtailed in 2003, marking the end of civilian supersonic travel.

Yet as Colorado-based Boom Supersonic pushes forward to bring its clean-sheet Overture airliner to market, elusive dreams of publicly accessible supersonic flight seem to be enjoying renewed focus. Could contemporary technological advancements to abate noise and emissions concerns, combined with evolving regulatory attention, finally align to allow an inaugural SSBJ—such as Spike Aerospace's protracted S-512 Diplomat project—to speed into service?

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

Unsurprisingly, early ambitions for civilian supersonic flight drew heavily on the military innovation that had already proved the technical and aerodynamic feasibility of breaking the sound barrier. Chuck Yeager became the first recognized individual to achieve this in October 1947, flying the experimental Bell X-1. The first fighter jet capable of breaking the sound barrier (exceeding Mach 1) in level flight, the North American F-100 Super Sabre, entered service in 1954.

The first supersonic business jet concept was proposed around 1990 by Gulfstream Aerospace and Russia's Sukhoi Design Bureau, drawing on the latter's defense expertise. A promotional booklet for the eight-to-12-passenger S-21 aircraft promised "all the high technology control and convenience with the advanced systems capability of a Gulfstream IV," elevating the Gulfstream's maximum speed of Mach 0.85 to a cruise speed of Mach 2+.

Significant aerodynamic redesigns included the addition of canards and variable geometry wings, complexities perhaps helping to prompt what the project partners termed a "conservative" development cycle of at least 20 years. After Gulfstream withdrew, Sukhoi continued until around 2012, although it was unsuccessful in securing sufficient additional funding.

A similar short-lived venture came from Dassault Aviation between 1997 and 1999, with a similarly canard-configured concept promising a cruise speed of Mach 1.8 and seating for eight passengers. However, Dassault deemed that no

civilian engines were suitable to power the project.

SHELVED AMBITIONS

Nevada-based startup Aerion, founded in 2003, took the pragmatic approach of partnering with major established aerospace companies in an attempt to bring its proposed 10-passenger AS2 aircraft to market. The $120 million super-cruising trijet was designed to offer speeds of up to Mach 1.5 over an ultra-long range of 5,000 nm.

A 2014 collaboration with Airbus was superseded by defense giant Lockheed Martin in 2017, before again being replaced by Boeing in 2019. However, although orders from fractional operators Flexjet and NetJets—placed in 2015 and 2021, respectively—indicated confidence, the company abruptly shut up shop in May 2021 after funding sources ran dry. Incidentally, Boeing ended up as the winning bidder for Aerion assets, ostensibly its patents and other intellectual property.

The 2019 Californian startup Exosonic followed suit in November 2024, explaining the hurdle to be primarily financial. "Although the founders and team still believe in the need/desire for quiet supersonic flight, without further customer support for either concept, the company cannot sustain the cash needed to make further advancements," wrote Exosonic in a statement.

CURRENT CONTENDERS

One notable contender continues in the quest to finally bring an SSBJ to market, with Atlanta-based Spike Aerospace remaining steadfast in its conviction that "the technology, the market, and the regulatory climate are lining up." The company's original plans for its 6,200-nm, 18-passenger S-512 called for a first flight in 2021, with deliveries scheduled from 2023. To date, no full-scale prototype has been built or flown.

In May 2025, Spike Aerospace CEO, founder, and president Vik Kachoria announced that the company had seemingly "returned," having "sharpened the [aircraft] concept, expanded [its] leadership, and refocused [its] strategy."

In August, Spike Aerospace announced it was refining the aerodynamics, cabin configuration, and lower-boom performance of its Mach 1.6 S-512 Diplomat. The company is completing what it calls an "enhanced study" that builds on previous research and design iterations to validate the aircraft's ability to meet stringent noise requirements over land with low-boom capability.

"For the moment, most of the work is in computational fluid design [CFD] analysis and evaluation," a company spokeswoman told **AIN** at the time. "In the near future, we may conduct wind-tunnel studies for several critical areas of flight that are more difficult/less reliable to do in CFD."

She added that the CFD work involves engineers conducting several trade studies where they adjust one parameter, such as the powerplants or speed, that might require a slight redesign of the aircraft. "Then they study the impact on the other parameters," she said.

The Atlanta-based firm is further working with aerospace companies, as well as key industry partners and academic institutions, to accelerate design, plot out certification, and prepare for market readiness, it said.

Spike Aerospace plans to develop a supersonic jet that can link London and Dubai in about 3.2 hours. Initial designs would have up to an 18-passenger cabin that, in lieu of windows, would sport full-length panoramic high-definition displays like those planned for the windowless Otto Aerospace Phantom 3500 light jet.

First flight of the S-512 is scheduled for late 2027, with service entry estimated in 2031. Range previously had been reported as 6,200 nm, but the spokeswoman said it is now 4,800 nm.

Spike Aerospace is back in the SSBJ game with the Mach 1.6 S-512 Diplomat design.

Aerion's ambitious AS2 never made it into the air, despite millions of dollars spent.

However, the company acknowledged on its website that bringing an aircraft to market "can cost upwards of $2 to $3 billion and take seven to 10 years," something it claims to be mitigating with "a phased development plan, government-backed grants, and dual-use commercial/military applications" to de-risk the process.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) is also evaluating its own conceptual aircraft concept to assess the feasibility of participation in producing a supersonic passenger jet. This is in addition to its Re-Boot (Robust En-route sonic-Boom mitigation Technology demonstration) project, conceived with two objectives: the "flight demonstration of robust low-boom design technology" and the "conceptual design of robust low-boom supersonic passenger aircraft."

EVOLVING REGULATORY LANDSCAPE

The feasibility of creating a so-called "quiet sonic boom" is inherently important to future commercial supersonic operations. Since 1974, FAA regulation 14 CFR 91.187 has prohibited all civil supersonic flight over land, a restriction adopted in many international locations and widely acknowledged as contributing to Concorde's limited commercial viability. However, in early 2025, Boom Supersonic's experimental proof-of-concept XB-1 test aircraft demonstrated what the company dubbed "boomless cruise"—breaking the sound barrier six times with no audible noise reaching the ground.

"Boomless cruise does not require extensive aircraft shaping," explained the company, adding: "Instead, it relies on the ability to break the sound barrier at a high enough altitude where the boom refracts harmlessly away from the ground." Although any supersonic aircraft can theoretically achieve this "sweet spot," Boom believes that modern engine efficiencies—and an aircraft's ability to fly in specific "boomless" "Mach cutoff" conditions without the use of noisy and fuel-hungry afterburners—now make its range realistic. "Additionally, in Concorde's era, the computing power to calculate appropriate speeds and altitudes was not available," concluded Boom.

NASA's X-59 Quesst (quiet supersonic technology) demonstrator is also designed to help "solve one of the most persistent challenges of supersonic flight," according to developer Lockheed Martin. Although not intended for commercial development, the X-59 made its inaugural flight in October 2025 and "will be used to collect community response data on the acceptability of a quiet sonic boom generated by the unique design of the aircraft." This breakthrough, Lockheed stated, "would open the door to an entirely new global market for aircraft manufacturers."

In June 2025, the White House also issued an executive order promising to reassess what it termed "outdated and overly restrictive regulations [that] have grounded the promise of supersonic flight over land." The proposal of an "interim noise-based certification standard" will look to "define acceptable noise thresholds...based on operational testing and research, development, testing, and evaluation data." Speaking to **AIN**, a FAA representative added that "aircraft companies seeking to test civil supersonic aircraft [still] require a special flight authorization" to do so.

IS THE MARKET READY?

"Lifting the ban will drive innovation in supersonic travel, not only for commercial but also for business jets focused primarily on overland routes," a Boom Supersonic spokesperson told **AIN**. Although Boom remains primarily focused on its 60- to 80-passenger Overture airliner, "just as we expect fares to come down over time as demand grows, future iterations of

A Skunk Works technician inspects NASA's X-59 Quesst wiring and sensors in preparation for first power-on. Right, the X-59 on the flight line.

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Overture will evolve to meet the needs of the market," the company maintained. In fact, Boom was an exhibitor at the most recent NBAA BACE show, suggesting an interest in the business aviation realm.

Acknowledging an "overlapping demand with passengers whose time is valuable, and who want supersonic for both coast-to-coast and business travel," Boom added that its "total addressable market of over 1,000 Overture aircraft" could potentially be conservative, citing "increases in speed [that] lead to increases in travel."

Concorde remains the world's most successful commercial supersonic aircraft.

THE SUBSONIC RACE

One of the few purpose-built business jets to exceed the sound barrier is the Bombardier Global 8000. This occurred in May 2021 during a flight test, but was not meant as a precursor to supersonic travel. Bombardier has consistently maintained that the testing was necessary to achieve certification at the high subsonic speeds it was targeting.

Other speedier business jets believed to have either eclipsed or skirted near the Mach 1 demarcation during experimental and/or certification flight tests include the Textron Aviation Cessna Citation X and Gulfstream G650.

A Bombardier spokesperson acknowledged that "while the idea of supersonic travel is exciting, the Global 8000 is already positioned in the optimal sweet spot for business aviation." With a top speed of Mach 0.95, the world's fastest business jet already represents "the perfect time machine, transporting customers faster and farther than any business aircraft in history," the spokesperson explained to **AIN**.

Additionally, there are those in the industry who suggest the time-saving benefits of supersonic flight are, arguably, not a primary focus of aircraft evolution. "While speed is important, the unique design of the Global 8000 ensures that the aircraft is also incredibly nimble," stressed Bombardier, pointing to the wide range of airports the aircraft can access. Advancements in ride comfort and connectivity solutions combine to provide what the OEM already describes as "a luxurious time machine that brings the world closer."

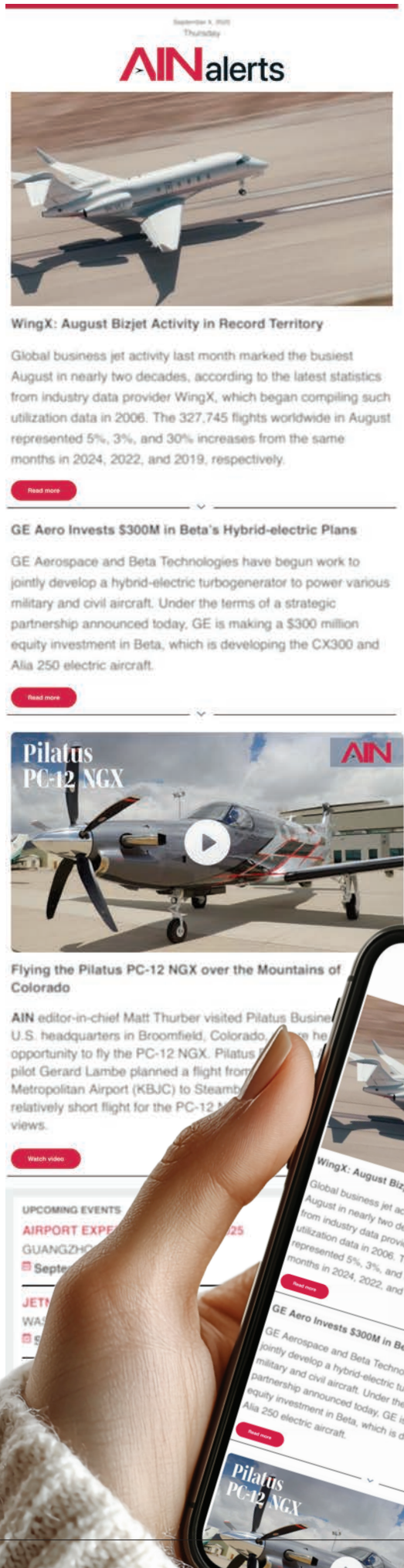
Gulfstream appears reticent to pursue a capability it has considered and seemingly shelved more than once over the decades. Some 20 years after its initial supersonic conversations with Sukhoi, the U.S. OEM achieved successful airborne testing of its patented "Quiet Spike sonic boom mitigator" device in 2006.

This "multi-segmented, articulating boom" was mounted on the nose of a NASA F-15 and featured on Gulfstream's design for an experimental swept-wing X-54 demonstrator, first proposed in 2008. Initial reports had indicated an earliest first flight of 2020, with larger commercial versions to follow in the 2030s, although Gulfstream is not evidently actively pursuing the concept.

As with the development of any clean-sheet aircraft, any supersonic business jet venture must carefully balance market demand with considerations of technical feasibility, commercial viability, and regulatory compliance. Ultimately, though it is technically feasible to get a business jet through the sound barrier, the higher fuel burn and associated weight considerations make the feat of limited practical use. Even if the overflight permissions over land evolve favorably, more stringent noise and emissions regulations, alongside elevated environmental scrutiny, are likely to add more pressure on certification and potential operation.

Speaking to **AIN** on condition of anonymity, a Global pilot working for a fractional operator suggested that supersonic capabilities represent no substantial time-saving value until speeds of at least Mach 2 could be achieved. This perspective is potentially arbitrary, but nevertheless, would operators be prepared to support the almost incalculable development costs for modest reductions in journey time?

"Time is money, but saving incrementally more of it is exponentially more costly. OEMs have more meaningful investments and upgrades to focus on," he concluded. And despite British band Oasis having penned the line "I'm feeling supersonic, give me gin and tonic," it seems the luxury service so synonymous with private aviation is going to stay—for the moment, at least—firmly on the other side of the sound barrier.



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Researchers 'seeing' into pilot minds with AI

BY CHARLOTTE BAILEY AND MATT THURBER

The explosion of applications for artificial intelligence (AI) technology hasn't escaped the notice of aviation researchers and developers, and an interesting use case around cameras and eye tracking has surfaced. The idea is that a system that can see a pilot's eyes and analyze the captured data can do everything from detecting and predicting cognitive overload (sometimes referred to as tunnel vision) to fatigue, motion sickness, and even diseases like Parkinson's or brain damage. Two companies have recently unveiled research in this area, HarmonEyes and Honeywell Aerospace, and the following summarizes how this technology may find its way into a cockpit of the future.

HONEYWELL TACKLES SLEEPINESS IN THE FLIGHT DECK

Pilot fatigue is a long-standing safety concern, prompting innovation into how flight deck workload can be managed and how technology could provide safeguards. A 2013 study by the British Airline Pilots' Association found that up to 56% of pilots have fallen asleep while on duty, and a further 29% of respondents admitted to having woken up to discover that their co-pilot was also asleep.

Honeywell Aerospace is addressing this through its Pilot State Monitoring solution for commercial airliners. The project forms part of the EU-backed SESAR-3 project called Digital Assistants for Reducing Workload and Increasing Collaboration (Darwin).

The system combines real-time camera feeds with software that uses AI to detect and process pilot facial cues and potential abnormalities. While the sleep and drowsiness element has already reached technology readiness level (TRL) 6, the ability to detect pilot incapacitation is expected to achieve the same maturity next year, according to Honeywell.

Speaking during a recent media briefing at the group's research and development hub at Brno in the Czech Republic, Bohdan Blaha, senior software engineering supervisor of Project Darwin, explained that detecting drowsiness or incapacitation in the flight deck is significantly more difficult than with car drivers. This, he explained, is because pilots typically move their focus from instrument panels to other tasks, as well as having greater freedom to move around or even leave the aircraft's controls.

Honeywell's technology uses a monochromatic camera to track real-time facial features such as eye positioning, with parameters such as blinking, duration of eye closure, yawning, and head posture every 30 seconds. An AI algorithm can then detect whether the pilot is drowsy, fully asleep, or otherwise incapacitated.

ALERTS WAKE UP PILOTS

Pilots can then be prompted to be more alert with aural warning alarms. In the interest of confidentiality, Honeywell's real-time system does not share or record data from incidents. Although Honeywell has experimented with smartwatches or other so-called "wearable" technology, Blaha explained that sharing data from these can pose privacy concerns. This approach can also be undermined if pilots forget to wear the device or if batteries are flat.

As part of ongoing evaluations, Honeywell has combined real-world data from its test aircraft with simulator-based trials. This included inviting a multitude of tired Brno employees to validate the system's alert functionality during various phases of drowsiness.

Accessories such as sunglasses and hats were also found to have no detrimental effect on the system's functionality. Although Blaha acknowledged that a pilot who is incapacitated by something like a medical emergency is harder to validate

through simulation, the system will nevertheless be of benefit. For instance, it could be deployed in future single-pilot cockpits as an extra layer of safety protection.

Following successful testing on Honeywell's Beech Bonanza, Falcon F900, and Boeing 757 test aircraft, the project's scope was expanded in 2025 to include an Embraer 170 airliner. An unidentified airline has also been testing the pilot monitoring system for 18 months onboard its Airbus A321, with the potential for it to enter service after Darwin is completed in 2026.

HARMONEYES PREDICTS COGNITIVE OVERLOAD WITH AI EYE TRACKING

After founding RightEye 12 years ago to bring eye-tracking technology from the laboratory into practical applications, co-founders Adam Gross and Melissa Hunfalvay launched a new division called HarmonEyes. RightEye had sold thousands of eye-tracking devices to the military, government, professional sports, hospital, and medical users, but technology was converging to make it possible to design new eye-tracking solutions marrying ubiquitous cameras with AI tools. The RightEye hardware is too complicated to use in a closed environment like a cockpit, for example, but not so with smartphone cameras or even individual cameras.

Gross explained that the HarmonEyes software development kit (SDK) is designed not to store any eye-tracking data. As the system delivers outputs every second, it destroys the prior second's data. "We're not storing, collecting, or recording any of the eye-tracking data," he said. "We're delivering the output to the customer, and it's up to the customer to secure consent from their pilots and their users, and they can use it the way that they want."

From its RightEye device business, HarmonEyes had access to nearly 15 million unique records of eye movements that signal "performance-based metrics like cognitive load...and fatigue and brain health signatures like Parkinson's disease and traumatic brain injury," Gross explained. "We've got this massive data set that we can train AI models on. But the real turning point was that the underlying technology that allowed you to extract an eye-tracking signal is mostly camera-based. Ten years ago, we needed kind of bespoke hardware for that. Now, whether it be a webcam on your PC, a phone, a tablet, a mixed-reality headset in the cockpit, those cameras are better, faster, cheaper, and we can extract the gaze vectors or the eye-tracking signal from it."

This resulted in the development of three performance-related tools using AI, addressing cognitive load, fatigue, and motion sickness. Gross explained cognitive load as "the level of mental effort when someone's performing a task and then measuring the reserve that someone's got in capacity to deal with surprises or new things coming up."

Where AI helps is not just in analyzing the eye-tracking data but in creating predictive models. The goal wasn't to help customers create a reactive solution if, say, a pilot is overloaded and fixates on the wrong task at the wrong time. "If I just tell you when you are in cognitive overload, which is a risky scenario to be in if you're flying a plane, then it's too late. You're already overloaded," he said.

"What we do is leverage AI and time-series data, and we create predictive models so we deliver a time predictor of when you're going to reach an overload state, a high level of fatigue, and even motion sickness. That's our differentiator."

Knowing that a person is heading toward what Gross called "a problematic state" allows for possible interventions, preferably before cognitive overload sets in. "If someone's overloaded, you could deflect a decision to the copilot," he said. "You can have a system intervention [such as haptic feedback, aural warnings, or other technology led by the AI agent]. It depends on the context of what's happening. But having that insight, knowing that someone's going to reach a problematic state, the stakeholder can deliver that intervention, and there could be several different interventions. If you can eliminate the dual- or triple-tasking elements of what's happening at the moment in time, right then, you can increase the capacity and the reserve that a pilot has mentally."

During training, an instructor could choose to let a high-cognitive-load situation play out, then address the problem in the debriefing and retrain to prevent it.

Eventually, HarmonEyes plans to offer AI agents that will be integrated into the detection system and deliver an autonomous intervention.

Honeywell's Pilot State Monitoring solution uses camera feeds and AI to detect fatigue.

Aero Asia 2025 highlights business aviation growth, safety needs

BY JENNIFER MESZAROS

@ Aero Asia 2025

Elevating the business and general aviation, along with the advanced air mobility (AAM) sectors in the Asia-Pacific region, Aero Asia 2025 opened in late November at China's Zhuhai International Airshow Center. The second staging of the biennial event attracted 381 companies from 22 countries and regions.

"The fair's second edition has grown significantly in scale and internationality. This is testament to the vast potential of general aviation in Asia-Pacific and China's world-leading low-altitude economy," Edward Che, executive director of Messe Frankfurt (Zhuhai) Airshow, told **AIN**. "We are pleased with the positive strides the Aero brand has made in Asia and look forward to further growth in the years to come."

Exhibitors covered seven major categories: single- and twin-engine airplanes, eVTOL vehicles, light sport aircraft, civil drones and uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS), helicopters, kit airplanes, and aircraft refueling equipment. The event was co-organized by Zhuhai Airshow Group and Messe Frankfurt (HK), which, through its Fairnamic joint venture with Messe Friedrichshafen, also runs the annual Aero Friedrichshafen show in Germany, as well as sister shows in South Africa.

Themed "A New Era, Explore More," this year's show emphasized collaboration between Chinese and German companies and is the only international general aviation fair approved by China's Ministry of Commerce. Exhibitors include Chinese eVTOL makers such as Aerofugia, AutoFlight, and Germany-based Volocopter, the latter of which is now backed by the Chinese owners of Diamond Aircraft.

Major Western manufacturers displaying their wares include Bombardier, Bell Textron, and Pratt & Whitney Canada. State-backed aerospace and defense group Aviation Industries of China had a strong presence and the show is also backed by the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association of China.

In tandem, the Asian Business Aviation Association (AsBAA) convened its 2025

Business jets and light aircraft took center stage at the 2025 China General Aviation and Business Aviation Safety International Symposium in Zhuhai.

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China General Aviation and Business Aviation Safety International Symposium during the Aero Asia show. The symposium brought together regulators, operators, and industry stakeholders to discuss safety, operational efficiency, and sustainable development in China and the Asia-Pacific business aviation market.

Opening the symposium, Rocky Zhang, vice president of government affairs at Textron China and chair of the Chinese mainland chapter and board of directors of AsBAA, stressed that safety underpins the growth of Asia-Pacific general and business aviation. AsBAA chairman Phil Balmer highlighted the region's potential, noting that Asia-Pacific now hosts more than 1,100 business aircraft, with China representing a major growth market.

Data from AsBAA China member Jet Master shows that business aviation activity in China rose 6.2% year over year from January to October 2025, including FBO movements in Hong Kong and Macau. Foreign-registered business jets have expanded for the fourth consecutive year, reflecting deeper integration with global aviation networks.

Asian Sky Group's recently published Asia-Pacific Region Charter Report-2025, noted that by mid-2025, the regional charter fleet reached 430 aircraft, up 18.8% from 362 in mid-2023, with all subregions recording growth. South Asia led the expansion, driven largely by India, whose fleet rose 53.2% to 121 aircraft, overtaking Australia as the largest charter market. Australia's fleet increased to 107 aircraft, retaining its position as the second-largest market, while Japan, Southeast Asia, Greater China, and Northeast Asia also saw steady gains.

The Asia-Pacific fleet composition reflects both market preferences and operational demands. Long-range jets remain the most common category, representing 23.7% of the fleet, followed by large jets at 21.2%, light jets at 20%, midsize jets at 19.3%, very light jets at 11.9%, and corporate airliners at 4%.

There was no shortage of eVTOL designs and interested attendees at the Aero Asia show.

Operator concentration also shows a mix of established and emerging players. TAG Aviation, Phenix Jet, Karnavati Aviation, and VSR Ventures lead with fleets of more than 10 aircraft, while 23 other operators maintain smaller fleets of three to four aircraft. Survey data indicate sustained demand for charter services, with safety records, service quality, and reputation remaining the primary factors influencing customer decisions.

FOCUS ON SAFETY

During the symposium, representatives from Textron Aviation China, Hong Kong Business Aviation Centre, ExecuJet Haite Tianjin, and Metro Jet discussed how human factors contribute to more than 80% of aviation incidents, emphasizing the importance of safety management systems (SMS) and threat and error management frameworks.

Star Jet, which presented a comprehensive SMS plan covering pre-flight assessment, in-flight control, and post-flight optimization, offered a reference for operations at Chinese airports. Aeromedical rescue programs were highlighted, including lessons from Lishui City in Zhejiang province, where 93 patients were transported over the past year, achieving a 100% success rate for routine cases and a 91.6% success rate for critical emergencies, while maintaining an operational cost of roughly $6 per minute.

According to Peiyi Wang, Star Jet's lead for the Lishui aeromedical rescue program it leverages affordable aviation medical insurance and public-private partnerships, coordinating helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and drones for medical supply delivery.

Representatives from Reignwood Asian General Aviation Beijing, Bell China, and Avion Pacific Group also shared experiences on helicopter-fixed-wing coordination, public-private partnership rescue networks, and drone applications for medical supply transport.

In closing remarks, Paul Desgrosseilliers, vice chairman of AsBAA and general manager of ExecuJet Haite China, urged breaking down data silos to promote safety knowledge sharing.

The symposium, co-hosted by AsBAA and Messe Frankfurt (Zhuhai) Airshow, with support from Bombardier, concluded with calls for greater collaboration and data sharing among operators to enhance safety and operational efficiency across the Asia-Pacific region.

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Taxiing hazards and letting your guard down

BY JULIE BOATMAN
AIN CONTRIBUTOR

"It came from out of nowhere!"

Whether we've uttered those words following a close call on the roads or on the taxiway, they ring a bit false. Instead, a lapse in attention has allowed a vehicle, object, person, or animal to come into our perceptual field without our having registered that they've arrived until the last moment.

The thing, whatever it was, certainly came from somewhere. We just didn't see it until we almost hit it.

Incidents during taxiing and other ground maneuvers don't capture the headlines that accidents involving loss of control in-flight, or deteriorating weather, do. But they pose a hazard to your operations that you may be overlooking. With the perceived increase in runway and other airport incursions throughout 2025, however, we have collectively turned our eyes to the ground. And for good reason.

At least one direct insurer of general aviation piston aircraft, Avemco, has revealed from its claims reports that time in type doesn't protect pilots from these mishaps—in fact, high time drives complacency, which increases potential risk. After reviewing the Avemco report, key facts popped out worth noting for all pilots:

Taxiing losses rarely happened to pilots with fewer than 50 hours in type. Once pilots pass the 50-hour mark, until they have about 2,500 total flight hours, taxi mishaps accounted for 11% of all claims for the pilot group Avemco analyzed. Interestingly enough, the taxi mishap rate increased to 13% for pilots with more than 2,500 hours total time.

Those interviewed point the finger at type-specific complacency for many of these losses. The rate for taxi losses increases a bit with 50 to 100 hours in type, remains relatively low for 100 to 500 hours in type, then begins to jump for the most experienced pilot group with more than 500 hours in type. This is blamed on distractions on the flight deck, with GPS navigators and other flight management systems—and cell phones and iPads—high on the list of culprits.

Kim Skipper, aviation underwriting manager for Avemco, sits in on every claim meeting for the insurer, so she can speak to the breadth of situations in which pilots lose vigilance. "A large portion—up to half—of our claims are ground-only type losses," she said. For almost 39 years, Skipper has been with Avemco, and she has witnessed several patterns represented in claims by the high-time single- and multi-engine piston pilots that Avemco insures.

Loss of control during taxi: when we think we don't need to do it at a slow pace, we lose directional control. While pushing an airplane in or out of a hangar, we clip a wing or have chocks that get bumped and slip enough to hit the tail on the back wall. Towbars also cause issues unless they are in your hands or in the airplane when you go to start the engine(s).

The same personality traits that draw a pilot to flying can become a gateway to complacency: we're goal-oriented, confident in our skills, and we take to heart the fact that we have people relying upon us to get a flight accomplished efficiently and on schedule.

DO HIGHER-LEVEL CERTIFICATES MATTER?

While Avemco typically insures owner-pilots, taking a look at the overall accident data reveals that these problems run throughout the owner-flown Part 91 and commercial Part 135 worlds—but they take on a different source of human error once you're talking about moving turbine equipment.

David Hampson, president of Schrager Hampson Aviation Insurance Group, based in Bedford, Massachusetts, pointed out one key difference. "With turbine aircraft, a lot of time the owner-operator is not the one towing the aircraft—it's FBO line staff or other crew putting it into the owner's hangar or into a shared hangar."

Contractual terms with the FBO are important, Hampson said, so be sure to check the fine print. A waiver of subrogation for the FBO, to go after its insurance company for that damage, is common. "Big FBO chains often include a subrogation clause in their contractual terms when the owner is leasing shared space. Because they usually have waiting lists, there's an aspect of 'take it or leave it,' so you don't have a choice."

Hampson sees more ground claims involving owner-flown aircraft and turboprops rather than jets, because a pilot is parking in their own hangar. "Even taxiing too...we have not had many claims relative to taxiing in turbine aircraft, perhaps because piston aircraft are more likely to squeeze into a small space," Hampson said.

He noted one claim involving a line tech guiding a Cirrus that hit the prop on a parked aircraft with its wing. There was more damage to the parked aircraft because

of engine teardown and other inspections involved. These incidents can cause a lot of expensive damage, with a half-million-dollar claim not uncommon, according to Hampson. You may need to factor in ferrying the aircraft to more extensive maintenance, which can add to the cost.

Hampson posited that Starlink satcom going into a broad range of aircraft could also add to the problem—with a greater ability to stream video content wherever we go, the temptation to distract with the little screen grows.

DETECTING THE PROBLEM

I turned next to the "Flight Safety Detectives"—a podcast produced and hosted by NTSB veterans John Goglia, Greg Feith, and Todd Curtis—for more insight. Indeed, they have devoted an entire episode to ground-based accidents that revolve around pilot complacency—and those include larger hardware than a light single or twin. "Lack of operational discipline is leading to avoidable plane damage insurance claims," said Feith in episode 196 of the podcast, which focuses on the problem. "Because the claims increase insurance rates, all general aviation pilots are paying a price."

Towing aircraft carries its own operational discipline factors that must be observed.

The episode included several examples, including airplanes running over taxi lights, ground collisions with aircraft and other objects, or engines started with towbars attached. Goglia and Feith see this lack of operational discipline by general aviation and professional pilots as a root cause of these avoidable incidents.

Goglia mentioned a fatal accident in 2014 involving a Gulfstream jet "where the aircraft operator exhibited operational discipline issues." In several cases, the pilot failed to maintain adequate distance from an obstruction. "The question is, why did they fail?" asked Feith in the podcast episode. "Is it because their depth perception was bad? Is it because they were complacent, and they taxied that same route a thousand times, and they weren't really paying attention? They weren't really understanding their situational awareness? They were a little off the centerline? Were they distracted, talking to ATC? Were they distracted, talking to a passenger? What was going on?

"It's all about maintaining the highest levels of operational discipline as soon as that airplane starts moving...or that engine starts running," Feith concluded. And the flight is not over until the aircraft is tugged safely into the hangar or put in the chocks. For example, he noted a Malibu hitting a light pole while being marshaled, with two pilots up front: "You can't just get zoned in and have that very narrow focus."

Several factors feel like they're stuck on repeat, such as starting the engine with the tow bar attached. What is the antidote? Preflight must be thorough and include safety checks following the main walkaround.

Another pitfall lies in the use of memory items instead of a checklist, which can lead to complacency and skipped items—especially when an abnormal or emergency is transpiring. The remedy? Take a beat, pull out the proper checklist, and run it deliberately—even on the ground when you're shutting the airplane down.

Another category of data to delve into draws from the tales pilots tell of themselves in the interest of safety. The Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS) is known to pilots as the "NASA report" because the de-identified data goes to that agency for analysis. Pilots are encouraged to file safety reports following an unintentional blunder or mishap (as long as it does not classify as an accident or incident) in exchange for immunity from certificate action by the FAA.

Airline pilot and philanthropist J.J. Madison has written a book reviewing 100 of these reports and gleaning from them what pilots might do to avoid their own mistakes. "Yikes! 100 Smart Pilots and the Dumb Things They Did Yet Lived To Tell About 'Em" supports the Victor Kilo Fund for pilot scholarships with its sales. And it's a gold mine for those operating turboprops and jets, as well as their own recreational piston aircraft.

Any departure from normal operations can be a recipe for incidents that go beyond complacency into distraction. And nighttime is particularly hazardous for ground operations, as Madison outlines in this example from the book:

"[It's] what tripped up a Cessna P210 pilot. After landing at an unfamiliar airport, the pilot missed the first available runway exit. In his NASA report, he wrote that the airport controller dispatched the airport police to guide him to the ramp. 'The police vehicle had its overhead light bar on with red, blue, and white lights. I informed the tower that the light bar was blinding me, but the controller said the officer needed to have it on.'

"The police lights destroyed the pilot's night vision. Without alternative indirect lighting to guide him, the pilot was rendered temporarily night-blind. He missed a turn and taxied his plane off the pavement and into the grass. Fortunately, neither the airport property nor the plane was damaged. 'I believe that this occurrence could have been totally avoided if the police officer had just shut off his light bar,'" the pilot concluded in his report.

"The policy mandating that the police officer keep his light bar on when moving on airport property was put into effect in the interest of safety. It is a requirement common to every airport where I've flown. Yet a pilot robbed of night vision while taxiing becomes a safety hazard to ground personnel and property."

Even the airlines get into it when hazards on the ground produce unintended consequences. In another excerpt from the book, Madison told a cautionary tale.

"A turboprop flight crew filed a NASA report after an assault on their night vision occurred at a deicing station. 'While deicing at KEWN, the ground crew marshals you into a dedicated deicing area northeast of Runway 22. Either the company or the airport has installed a giant 1,000-watt halogen light at ground level that blasts the flight crew with blinding light so bad that you cannot even see the marshal...'

"The deicing crew turned off the light after the flight crew complained about the light blinding them and making it impossible to see the marshal. The deicing crew informed the flight crew it was local procedure to use that light during deicing operations.

"Blinded by the halogen light, the turboprop flight crew could have run over the marshal or taxied a propeller into him or the deicing truck. Mounting the deicing light at a low level could be for the benefit of the deicing crew. It's likely positioned at an average wing-level height to help the deicing folks better see the accuracy of their work. It seems, however, that whoever put up that light did not seek input from pilots, or at least take into consideration the effect the light's position would have on them."

While night vision training is critical in mitigating these particular scenarios, it remains an overall example of how complacency can get the best of us—especially when we think the flight is over.

And with that in mind, we can remain vigilant and know we're our own worst enemies when it comes to those incidents that "came out of nowhere."

While taxiing at night, don't hesitate to call out issues that affect your night vision.

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Sikorsky on track for U-Hawk first flight next year

BY CHARLOTTE BAILEY AND HANNEKE WEITERING

The Sikorsky S-70UAS U-Hawk's fully autonomous helicopter offers 25% more payload capacity than a conventional UH-60L Black Hawk.

@ Dubai Airshow 2025

Sikorsky Aircraft's upcoming fully autonomous UH-60L Black Hawk variant, the S-70UAS U-Hawk, is on track to perform its first test flight next year. Speaking to reporters during the Dubai Airshow, Sikorsky confirmed that the program has already registered worldwide interest in a capability that could include "reusing airframes that are already in the system."

Unveiled with a mockup in October at the annual Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA) conference in Washington, the U-Hawk went from "concept to what we call concrete in 10 months," Ramsey Bentley, Sikorsky's director of strategy and business development for advanced programs, told reporters during the briefing.

According to Sikorsky, the uncrewed aircraft system (UAS) has 25% more payload capacity than the traditional UH-60L Black Hawk family of utility helicopters, with a maximum payload of 10,000 pounds. It will be able to fly for up to 1,600 nm or loiter for 14 hours without refueling.

In the U-Hawk, Sikorsky has replaced the Black Hawk's cockpit and flight deck with two actuated clamshell doors and an automated ramp for loading and unloading cargo. However, the U-Hawk retains the Black Hawk's side door, as well as its ability to externally lift up to 9,000 pounds.

A larger cabin space allows for longer oversized cargo items such as missiles, the company said. For example, it can carry up to six HIMARS rockets internally. The U-Hawk could also carry swarms of reconnaissance or strike drones, as well as automated ground vehicles, which can use the new ramp to drive directly into the cargo bay.

Noting the swift transformation into a concrete product, Rich Benton, Sikorsky vice president and general manager, added, "The modifications made to transform this crewed Black Hawk into a multi-mission payload UAS can be replicated at scale quickly and affordably." U-Hawk flight testing is expected to begin in 2026.

Bentley described this as "a very mature system working on multiple configurations of aircraft—rotary, fixed-wing aircraft, and also UAS [uncrewed aerial systems]."

In lieu of the Black Hawk's conventional flight controls, the U-Hawk features a fly-by-wire system that integrates with Sikorsky's Matrix autonomous flight technology. Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin subsidiary, has previously demonstrated the Matrix system on Black Hawks for the U.S. Army and DARPA, and it recently demonstrated autonomous aerial firefighting capabilities.

"The U-Hawk offers a cost-effective utility UAS by leveraging commonality with the existing UH-60 fleet, and its uncrewed nature reduces both operating and maintenance costs," said Igor Cherepinsky, director of Sikorsky Innovations, the company's rapid prototyping group.

"We focused on efficiencies in the retrofit by designing and manufacturing vehicle management computers, actuation components, and airframe modifications. We will incorporate those efficiencies into future modifications and manufacturing for our family of UAS products."

U-Hawk flights are remotely operated using tablets, and the development team tested the flight control system by giving the tablet to four-star generals and 19-year-old trainees. "They've all had no issue," Bentley said.

"The tablet allows you to actually take the aircraft from a ground start all the way through the flight and shut down the aircraft," Bentley noted, "so the aircraft is fully able to handle all the emergency procedures and everything else, just like a human pilot would in the aircraft."

Alongside new-builds, "there might be another use for an [older UH-60] aircraft to extend its life by this different sort of autonomous application," Beth Parcella, Sikorsky's vice president of strategy and business development, said during the briefing. However, "to reinstall a cockpit would probably be cost-prohibitive at that point."

The uncrewed Black Hawk is part of a larger drive toward autonomy at Sikorsky. The company also has unveiled plans for a family of autonomous and hybrid-electric cargo drones called Nomad, which it said could scale from a small Group 3 UAS "to the footprint equivalent of a Black Hawk." The Nomad design features a rotor-blown, tilt-wing tailsitter with vertical takeoff and landing capabilities. Sikorsky has already flown a 115-pound demonstrator and is preparing to begin test flights with the larger Nomad 100 prototype in the coming months.

> "The modifications made to transform this crewed Black Hawk into a multi-mission payload UAS can be replicated at scale quickly and affordably."
>
> — Rich Benton
> Sikorsky vice president and general manager

With no need for a cockpit, the U-Hawk features doors and a ramp for loading vehicles.

FBO AND AIRPORT NEWS BY CURT EPSTEIN

Atlantic Aviation Expands in the Caribbean

Atlantic Aviation has expanded its network in the Caribbean with the purchase of the ExecuJet FBO at Princess Juliana International Airport (TNCM) on Saint Maarten. One of two service providers on the field, ExecuJet had operated there since it acquired an FBO in 2016.

The location offers a full suite of ground handling services, including fueling, parking, landing permits, water, lavatory cleaning, and GPUs, as well as concierge, customs and immigration clearance, catering coordination, and ground transport.

For Atlantic, this represents its third FBO in the region, joining facilities on Grand Cayman (MWCR) and Turks and Caicos (MBPV).

Texas MRO Provider Haven Opens Its First FBO

Haven Aviation Services Group has opened its first FBO—at Rick Husband Amarillo International Airport (KAMA) in Texas. Specializing in aircraft maintenance, the company began at the airport in 2017.

The facility—which now gives aircraft operators a choice of FBOs at KAMA—is centrally located on the field and includes a 12,000-sq-ft terminal with refreshment bar, pilot lounge and snooze rooms, conference room, classroom, valet, concierge, and courtesy cars. Its 30,000-sq-ft hangar can shelter ultra-long-range business jets, and the Avfuel-branded dealer's fuel farm can hold 60,000 gallons of jet-A and 15,000 gallons of avgas.

Jet Aviation Up and Running at Miami–Opa Locka Exec

Little more than a year after it began construction at Miami–Opa Locka Executive Airport (KOPF), Jet Aviation has begun aircraft handling operations from a temporary facility, making it the fifth FBO at KOPF and the company's 13th location in the U.S. and its territories.

Upon completion in early 2026, the FBO will include an 8,500-sq-ft LEED silver-certified terminal with a private entrance on the west side of KOPF, electric vehicle charging stations, LED lighting, and solar panels. It also will offer an onsite 4,800-sq-ft U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility, more than 12 acres of ramp, and 40,000 sq ft of hangar space capable of storing ultra-long-range business jets.

Texas Aero FBO in Waco Changes Hands

FBO operator Freeman Holdings Group has purchased Texas Aero, the lone service provider at Waco Regional Airport (KACT). The Avfuel-branded facility, which includes a 6,000-sq-ft, two-story terminal, will be rebranded as Freeman Jet Center-Waco, while its staff will be retained to ensure continuity of service for its customers. Texas Aero Jet Sales will continue to operate independently under its existing ownership.

The FBO complex also has 53,000 sq ft of hangar space capable of sheltering super-midsize business jets. Plans call for the construction of a 25,000-sq-ft hangar that would handle the latest ultra-long-range aircraft.

Freeman, the largest Million Air franchisee, operates a portfolio of 22 locations under the Million Air and Freeman Jet Center brands. It also has an ownership stake in California-based ACI Jet, which has FBOs in San Luis Obispo and Santa Ana.

Alliance Aviation Eyes Growth in Saudi Arabia

Alliance Aviation, which recently opened the first general aviation hangar at Saudi Arabia's AlUla International Airport (OEAO), is hoping to build out the site as a central general aviation facility that accommodates other aviation businesses as the company eyes expansion into other locations, according to CEO Brendan McQuaid.

During a panel at the recent Irish Business and General Aviation Association's International Business Aviation Conference in Kildare, Ireland, McQuaid called that move "the beginning of Alliance Aviation in the kingdom, and from there we'll hopefully develop into other airports on the west coast."

In late October, Alliance Aviation announced it had opened the hangar and FBO facility at OEAO in partnership with the Royal Commission for AlUla in western Saudi Arabia. The 30,677-sq-ft hangar has space for two Gulfstream G650s, and a Bombardier Challenger 650 or two light jets.

The company provides bizav operators access to a VIP lounge and full ground-handling services, with direct ramp access for passengers and crew. Amenities include a crew rest and operations area with high-speed connectivity and 24/7 security.

"This launch is a milestone for Alliance and for Saudi Arabia's private aviation future," said McQuaid. "We are proud to partner with the Royal Commission for AlUla in creating a facility that reflects the region's heritage, hospitality, and the kingdom's vision for world-class infrastructure."

Alliance Aviation had been in Saudi Arabia for seven years, primarily as a charter service provider for a couple of clients, McQuaid said. It had unsuccessfully bid for Red Sea International Airport services but was already closely aligned with the airport manager DAA International, which also manages Dublin International Airport.

A hangar at Alliance Aviation's new FBO at AlUla International Airport in Saudi Arabia.

"We found the DAA International was very supportive, and then AlUla came up," he said. "We tendered for the hangar there." Noting that Alliance Aviation took the "keys" to the facility in October, McQuaid expects the facility to be fully operational in January.

Alliance Aviation plans to expand its Part 145 to the Saudi location. Along with a line maintenance base, the company is establishing a rapid response rig, a "big truck" or motorhome, that can dispatch to AOG situations. The truck will be equipped to remain on location for an extended period. AlUla provides proximity to airports along the west coast.

Noting that the move into Saudi Arabia took about a year, he said. "It's not an easy task. It took…a lot of money. So now we've learned the footfalls, we want other companies to come in and for AlUla… We're providing a service of administration of everything from office setup to licensing with GACA, which is the civil aviation authority regulation."

Earlier this year, Saudi Arabia lifted cabotage restrictions, enabling foreign charter operators to offer domestic flights, and Vista became the first approved operator in August.

McQuaid acknowledged to **AIN** that Alliance Aviation had been asked why Saudi Arabia, rather than a more developed business aviation location such as the UAE. "Saudi is in its infancy now. It's really just beginning. It's brand new. There's not enough infrastructure there to support the Vistas and Flexjets… There is no line maintenance for GA."

He highlighted the importance of getting a foothold now: "We're going to be one of the first. If you go to America, you're the last. If you come to Europe, second to last; UAE, third to last.

"There's lots of potential there," he continued. "There's 35 million in Saudi. There are no railroads to connect the cities. The only way is flying. So there is a huge market for corporate jets."

While Alliance Aviation has worked closely with the DAA with its FBO in Dublin and the DAA supported its efforts in the Kingdom, "We actually don't work together at the moment in Saudi Arabia. We're independent companies," he explained. "But there is a huge Irish community giving support and help to other Irish companies there…and we want to provide the support for them."

The move is the continuing expansion of the company that McQuaid co-founded in 2013 to build out a multi-faceted business aviation services company and elevate Irish aviation.

—Charles Alcock contributed to this article

COMPILED BY CURT EPSTEIN

Ontic Opens MRO Center of Excellence in Florida

Aerospace parts manufacturer Ontic has opened an MRO facility in Miramar, Florida, the company's eighth site worldwide. The new facility, which recently received FAA approval, cost $10 million and covers 64,000 sq ft, and it consolidates Ontic's U.S. MRO teams, equipment, and processes in one location.

Ontic specializes in aerospace components as a license holder to the original manufacturer. As the manufacturer, the company explained, "Ontic retains the proprietary data, tooling, and test equipment required to repair components to OEM standards. This ensures repairs that are longer-lasting and backed by an OEM warranty, providing operators with the assurance that every component meets its original engineering specification." Equipment at the Miramar facility includes a paint room, vibration testing, a machine shop, and a portable dark room. The site supports electro-mechanical, avionics, actuation, and hydraulics components.

PAG Swoops In To Acquire H.E.R.O.S. Engine MRO Provider

Precision Aviation Group (PAG) has acquired Helicopter Engine Repair Overhaul Services (H.E.R.O.S.), a specialized Rolls-Royce M250/RR300 engine maintenance provider based in Chandler, Arizona, expanding PAG's geographic reach and engine support capabilities. The acquisition adds H.E.R.O.S.'s modern engine facility to PAG's network, increasing the company's dedicated M250/RR300 support facilities to more than 80,000 sq ft. H.E.R.O.S. provides MRO services for the M250/RR300 engine platforms along with related accessories and components for domestic and international operators. The company operates an advanced facility equipped with specialized tooling and test cell capabilities and extensive experience in the turboshaft engine maintenance sector. The transaction provides H.E.R.O.S. access to enhanced resources and PAG's global customer network. PAG provides MRO services and supply-chain solutions within the aerospace and defense industries globally.

AMAC Boosts MRO Capability To Meet Rising Demand

AMAC Aerospace recently inaugurated a 44,130-sq-ft engineering center at its headquarters complex in Basel, Switzerland, to help meet growing demand for its aircraft MRO and modification services. The three-floor structure provides space for multiple disciplines, including mechanical design for stress and structures, systems, cabinets, production engineering, avionics and electrical engineering, technical documentation, and airworthiness. With more than 160 engineers based onsite, AMAC claims to be one of the largest aviation engineering departments in Europe, supporting both airliners and business aircraft up to the size of a Boeing 747. So far this year, the team has delivered more than 160 approved modifications and has more than 50 other projects underway. The scope of work spans supplement type certificate changes, including installations of satellite communications antennas and cabin interior outfitting.

DAS Aviation Buys Dallas-area Aircraft Mx Provider AQRD

FAA Part 145 repair station DAS Aviation—with facilities in Cedar Hill, Texas; Solon, Ohio; and Collinsville, Illinois—has acquired Texas-based Aerospace Quality Research and Development (AQRD). The deal creates a single, integrated off-wing services platform that includes engineering, component repair, composites, and parts supply.

The purchase of AQRD—located at Addison Airport (KADS)—gives the company's customers a faster path to aircraft return-to-service through technician-focused engineering, immediate execution, parts availability, and a stronger AOG response. DAS noted that there will be no change to existing points of contact with the two companies now under the same banner.

Desert Jet Maintenance Extending Reach Through Evolution

Desert Jet has been an evolving company since its founding in 2006 as an aircraft management and acquisition business in Palm Springs, California.

In 2009, it entered the aircraft charter arena, with its Part 135 certificate listing Cessna Citations, Bombardier Challengers, Beechcraft King Airs, and even a Gulfstream or two. But with those aircraft came maintenance needs, and in an effort to gain better control over the scheduling and availability of its fleet, the company in 2013 launched Desert Jet Maintenance (DJM), its FAA Part 145-certificated repair station, offering service not just to the Desert Jet fleet, but to the entire KTRM community.

In 2016, the company—with a lease on a large vacant hangar on the field—launched its own FBO with temporary hospitality facilities as it prepared for its eventual permanent home. Three years later, it opened the doors of its $7 million Desert Jet FBO, including its 23,000-sq-ft, climate-controlled hangar. Last year, the company came full circle as it sold off its charter certificate, devoting itself strictly to aviation support services.

"Previously, a lot of our MRO focus was specifically on our [Part] 135," said Desert Jet CEO Jared Fox. "With the sale of that, it's created significant bandwidth for us to be able to focus on others." He added that the company's long experience as a former aircraft operator gives it valuable insight into that arena. "Because we've been there, we know that sometimes it might be working at night, it might be doing all-hands-on-deck maintenance to get something out for a trip the next morning."

Currently, the company has a crew of six aircraft maintenance technicians with Textron factory-OEM training. "Our expertise comes from our [Part] 135 days where our [Part] 145 heavily supported that, so everything in the Textron family we are very familiar with, and capable of doing," Fox told **AIN**. "Doc inspections, regular scheduled maintenance, you name it."

Desert Jet's 23,000-sq-ft hangar can accommodate aircraft up to the latest ultra-long-range business jet, but the MRO's sweet spot is in the small- to midsize-jet range.

As such, DJM specializes in Cessna Citations and Beechcraft King Airs. Also on the company's list of approved aircraft are the Embraer Phenoms and the Beechcraft Premier. "We've taken CJ3s all the way down to their frames, we've done all the inspections, essentially anything you can do on an aircraft, we've done it at one point," Fox noted. In terms of capabilities, DJM draws the line at major engine work. "We will remove the engine, we will crate it up to send to the OEM, but we're not going to do the hot section."

At peak capacity, the company can have as many as six aircraft projects going at once at its facility. "We are able to work closely with owner-operators of [Part] 91 aircraft, and we become their turnkey maintenance division for them," Fox explained. "We will work hand in glove with them, whether that be going through their to-do list, or helping put a plan in place for the next two years."

For floating fleet operators without a base in the area, DJM can act as an extension of their maintenance operation. "If there's an operator that operates a large amount of an aircraft type, we can build a program, send our tech specifically to OEM training for that specific type, and build out a—call it a West Coast base, for them," said Fox, adding that it is working on several such deals and is hiring more AMTs in preparation.

Next summer, the company expects to break ground on a new $20 million expansion, which will add an additional 7 acres to its leasehold and will feature a new 60,000-sq-ft hangar to be used for additional maintenance space and aircraft storage.

The company also offers 24/7 AOG support, not just at KTRM but anywhere within a 250-nm radius that encompasses much of Southern California. "We take it as a key part of our responsibility being here at the airport to help anybody who is flying in," said Fox. "We've done and can do AOG on anything and everything, really."

With an eye toward the future, in partnership with a local high school, the company participates in a shadowing program where students interested in aviation can get first-hand exposure to the industry. It is about to hire its first former student, who became a line technician at the FBO while he earned his A&P license.

BY DAVID JACK KENNY

Preliminary Reports

Disconnected Pitch-change Link Implicated in California Accident

Bell 222, Oct. 11, 2025, Huntington Beach, California

Still photos and video clips captured by witnesses during a low-speed pass that preceded the crash showed that one tail rotor pitch-change link had become disconnected from its blade. The pilot, his passenger, and one person on the ground were seriously hurt when the helicopter crashed into a staircase at the end of a pedestrian bridge. Two others suffered minor injuries.

The pilot and passenger had flown from Redlands, California, to Huntington Beach to participate in a "Cars and Copters" event, intending to land in a parking lot. Images of the helicopter recorded during a high-speed pass over Huntington Beach did not reveal any discrepancies. After circling, the pilot approached the parking lot from the southeast and began descending, making "a small right pedal input to straighten the helicopter." It veered left, and the pilot added power, turning right to avoid the confined landing area, but was unable to maintain control.

Pieces of the tail rotor assembly began to separate prior to impact. The tail rotor gearbox broke in half; the output side landed in the parking lot with the tail rotor still attached. Both pitch change horns were fractured, though all their bolts and associated hardware remained intact and secured.

TBM Destroyed Attempting Return to Airport

Daher TBM 700, Oct. 13, Dartmouth, Massachusetts

Ten minutes after taking off from the New Bedford Regional Airport, the turboprop single crashed into the median of Interstate 195, killing the pilot and passenger and causing minor injuries to the driver of a car struck during the impact sequence. Prevailing weather included northeast winds of 19 knots with gusts to 28 and two and one-half miles visibility under a 900-foot broken ceiling with a one-degree temperature/dew point spread.

The turboprop departed at 08:05 local time on an IFR flight plan to Kenosha, Wisconsin. Shortly after takeoff, the pilot radioed that he was returning to the airport, read back an instruction to enter a left downwind for Runway 05, and indicated that he would not need assistance after landing. The controller then asked whether he could fly an approach or needed radar vectors; the pilot replied that he "should be okay." About one minute later, the controller issued a low-altitude alert, and the pilot read back the local altimeter setting, followed shortly by "an unintelligible exclamation."

Trees cut off about 50 feet above the ground marked the beginning of a 280-foot debris field 3.6 nm southeast of the airport. The wreckage continued on a 223-degree heading through a wooded area, across an off-ramp, and into the highway's median. Most of the left wing and all of the right had separated from the fuselage; the empennage and portions of both wings had been consumed by a post-impact fire. The fuselage was mostly intact but buckled in several places, and both seats had separated from their installation points but remained inside the cabin.

No fuel was recovered from the wing tanks, which were both breached, but a strong aroma "consistent with jet-A fuel" was present at the scene. There was no sign of fuel leaks or obstructions. All five composite propeller blades had separated from the hub near their roots and "displayed varying amounts of leading-edge damage." The pilot's and co-pilot's primary flight displays remained installed and were recovered for data download.

Hawker Jet Lost During Stall Testing

Hawker 800XP, Oct. 16, Bath, Michigan

The Mexican-registered corporate jet crashed during a post-maintenance test flight, killing the pilot, co-pilot, and sole passenger. The jet departed Battle Creek Executive Airport at Kellogg Field (KBTL) at 17:08 local time following a series of "multiple routine inspections" spanning some seven months that included removing the wings' leading edges and TKS ice-protection panels to scan for cracks and evidence of corrosion. After that inspection, the manufacturer requires a stall test before the airplane is returned to service.

After takeoff, the Hawker made a climbing left turn and flew to an area about 9 miles northeast of KBTL. The crew requested a block altitude between FL140 and 160, which was approved. The aircraft levelled off at FL150; then, at 17:27, it began a rapid descent from FL140. A broken transmission from the aircraft was followed by "We are in a ..." followed by Spanish words for "in a stall, recovering, sorry." No further transmissions were received.

The wreckage was found in a relatively flat attitude about 9 miles northeast of KBTL at an elevation of 850 feet. A post-impact fire consumed almost the entire aircraft, with the exceptions of part of the right wing, both winglets, and the empennage. The company that conducted the maintenance reported having provided the pilots with a list of experienced test pilots who could conduct the stall tests, but after being unable to coordinate with any of them, the flight crew chose to perform the testing themselves.

In addition to specifying strict conditions for stall tests, the Hawker 800XP pilot's

operating handbook cautions that "There is no natural stall warning or aerodynamic buffet prior to the stall" and further warns that "PILOTS CONDUCTING STALL CHECKS SHOULD HAVE PRIOR EXPERIENCE IN PERFORMING STALLS IN THE HAWKER AND MUST BE PREPARED FOR UNACCEPTABLE STALL BEHAVIOR AT ANY POINT LEADING UP TO AND THROUGHOUT THE MANEUVER."

The NTSB's preliminary report notes that the agency "has investigated at least three other accidents/incidents involving the performance of required stall tests after maintenance in business jets."

Final Reports

Insufficient Pedal Input Faulted in Rollover

Eurocopter EC120, May 15, 2025,
Porepunkah Aerodrome, Victoria, Australia

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) concluded that the highly experienced pilot failed to use sufficient right pedal pressure to counteract left yaw during takeoff, allowing the yaw to accelerate into an uncontrolled spin. After completing three-quarters of a turn, the aft portion of the helicopter's right skid struck the ground, causing dynamic rollover. The pilot and pilot-rated passenger were not injured and extricated themselves from the wreckage "with some difficulty," but the helicopter sustained damage, including broken main rotor blades, a collapsed right skid, and crush damage to the right side of the fuselage.

At about 13:00 local time, the pilot started the engine for the planned private flight to Albury, 38 nm to the north. He reported that the helicopter was initially slow to lift off when he attempted to bring it into a hover but then climbed rapidly and began an uncommanded left yaw. As he planned to make a left 180-degree pedal turn, he allowed the yaw to continue before applying right pedal while increasing collective to gain altitude. The pedal input was insufficient to counter the additional torque imparted by the power increase.

The pilot held a commercial helicopter license with a Class 1 medical certificate and had logged 11,257 hours of flight experience but had not flown an EC120B "for about 15 years." The ATSB report noted that the Fenestron tail rotor used by that model requires greater pedal input to maintain yaw authority than conventional tail rotor systems, and cited a lack of recent make-and-model experience as contributing to the accident.

Ice and Snow Led to Fatal TBM 700 Stall

Daher TBM 700, Nov. 26, 2023,
Ludington, Michigan

The pilot's decision to take off with ice and snow on the wings led to an aerodynamic stall and fatal crash of a Daher TBM 700 shortly after departure from Mason County Airport (KLDM), according to the NTSB's final report. Both the instrument-rated private pilot and his passenger, a commercial pilot and instructor, were killed.

The aircraft was operating under Part 91 on an IFR flight to Angola, Indiana. About 15 minutes after being pulled from an unheated hangar, the pilot taxied for takeoff with visible snow on the wings and horizontal stabilizer. Weather conditions included moderate snow and zero visibility, with a temperature of -1 degrees C.

Witnesses reported the left wing dropped shortly after rotation. One observer said the aircraft was loud and low before it cleared trees and struck the ground. The NTSB cited warnings in the pilot's operating handbook and Daher-Socata Service Letter 70-053, which emphasized the risk of performance degradation and stall due to snow or ice contamination.

Flight records showed the pilot had completed a flight review and IPC in the TBM 700 seven months prior, including training in winter conditions. He had approximately 4,700 hours total time, including 320 hours in the TBM 700. The NTSB concluded that failure to deice the aircraft was the primary cause of the accident.

Power Bank Obstructed EC155 Controls at EINN

Airbus Helicopters EC155B,
Sept. 15, 2022, Shannon, Ireland

A loose portable power bank obstructing the collective pitch lever led to a loss of control in flight during transition to hover, causing a hard landing of an Airbus Helicopters EC155B at Shannon Airport (EINN), according to Ireland's Air Accident Investigation Unit (AAIU).

The rotorcraft, registered EI-XHI, was repositioning from Loughrea, County Galway, with only the 50-year-old pilot aboard. As the aircraft neared the light aircraft parking area, the pilot attempted to flare and transition to a hover. However, collective lever movement was limited to just 20–25 mm from the full-down position. The AAIU found the lever was blocked by an unsecured power bank that had slipped between the pilot's seat and the avionics center console, wedging against the lever's friction lock adjuster sleeve.

The helicopter struck the taxiway with significant force, damaging the left main and nose landing gear and causing structural damage to the nose. The aircraft remained upright and continued toward the east apron. The last recorded ground speed was 55 knots. The pilot, who was wearing a five-point harness, was uninjured. No post-impact fire occurred.

Investigators found that the power bank fit precisely into the space between the lever and the console. Witness marks confirmed the interference. The AAIU cited similar past incidents, including a 2001 EC120 accident and a 2022 U.S. Army CH-47D crash caused by unsecured devices obstructing controls. The agency issued three safety recommendations addressing helicopter landing protocols, infrastructure review, and flight data recorder compliance.

—Amy Wilder contributed to this report.

Compliance Countdown

BY GORDON GILBERT

JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Jan. 5, 2026

U.S.: Expanded Use of Upper C-band

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) on its plan to auction up to 180 MHz of spectrum in the 3.87 to 4.2 GHz (upper C-band) for next-gen wireless services. The auction must be underway no later than July 4, 2027. The FCC plans to apply the framework used in the 2020 lower C-band auction (3.7-3.98 GHz), which allocated 280 MHz for flexible wireless use and expanded 5G access. The agency says it will maintain "close coordination" with the FAA to ensure adjacent-band radio altimeters can coexist safely with new 5G and 6G services. Previous 5G rollouts caused flight disruptions due to altimeter interference, and ADs mandated retrofits. The FAA is expected to adopt new radio altimeter standards before the auction, ensuring that 5G and future 6G services can operate without disrupting aviation safety. Comments on the FCC NPRM are due by Jan. 5, 2026. Reply comments are due by Feb. 3, 2026.

Jan. 1, 2026

Netherlands: Eindhoven To Ban Private Aircraft

Starting on Jan. 1, 2026, fossil-fuel private aircraft operations will be banned from operating at Eindhoven Airport. "As private flights have a relatively large noise and CO2 footprint per passenger and only marginally meet our region's mobility needs, we have decided not to allow them at Eindhoven Airport from 2026," according to a statement from airport authorities. "If opportunities arise for sustainable small-plane aviation (such as electric flying) that adds value to the region, we would want to facilitate that." It was not immediately clear if the ban extends to business aircraft charter flights.

Jan. 1, 2026

Singapore: No-Boarding Directive

Singapore will introduce a No-Boarding Directive (NBD) early in 2026, applicable to all inbound commercial and private flights. The aim of the NBD is to deny boarding to "travelers deemed high-risk or otherwise undesirable before they arrive at immigration checkpoints." Essentially, the NBD will be integrated into the APIS. When NBD is active, operators will receive either an "OK to board" or "Do Not Board" response for each person on the flight. It will be considered an "offense" by Singapore to depart for the country carrying anyone who receives the NBD designation.

Jan. 1, 2026

UK: Drone Marketing Rules

Starting Jan. 1, 2026, "open category" drones must meet new product standards. The UK's CAA Market Surveillance Authority (MSA) is tasked with ensuring that drone manufacturers, importers, and distributors comply with the new standards. The open category covers "low-risk drone flights and leisure activities." The MSA said enforcing these new standards means users will have more confidence that drones they purchase are safe.

Jan. 23, 2026

U.S.: Designee Management System

Under an FAA draft order, the Designee Management Policy (Draft Change 1) would transition from the Designee Registration System to the Designee Management System (DMS) and would align Order 8000.95 with the DMS tool workflows. The draft would revise several procedural descriptions to better match DMS workflows, including updates to digital signatures and automation for registering, enrolling, tracking, and recording designee training completions. Additionally, Draft Change 1 would revise the Designated Pilot Examiner, Specialty Aircraft Examiner, and Administrative Pilot Examiner designee policy to update the documentation of training, require designees to submit training certificates through the DMS, and establish suspension protocols for incomplete training, while clarifying training terminology and categories. The draft would also change the algorithm for the frequency of direct observation oversight intervals required of FAA Flight Standards managing specialists. Comments on the draft are due by Jan. 23, 2026.

Feb. 10, 2026

EASA: Artificial Intelligence in Aviation

Under an EASA notice of proposed amendment (NPA), a set of detailed specifications would be established on artificial intelligence (AI) trustworthiness for the safe use of AI in aviation. Objectives of the rulemaking are to support the deployment of AI in specific aviation domains and create a comprehensive AI-trustworthiness regulatory framework that will allow for the potential seamless deployment of AI in other aviation domains in the future. EASA said, "The proposed regulatory material is expected to maintain the current level of safety and provide benefits in terms

of innovation and efficiency to the aviation sector." The NPA also includes proposed associated acceptable means of compliance and guidance material for AI trustworthiness. Comments are due by Feb. 10, 2026.

Feb. 22, 2026

EASA: Implementing Regulation

Several times a year, EASA releases a compendium of regulations that aim to update and clarify regulations, correct errors, consolidate previously issued stand-alone requirements and proposals, and make other minor changes. This group of implementing regulations includes: technical requirements and administrative procedures related to civil aviation aircrew; rules for airworthiness and environmental certification; administrative procedures related to airports and air traffic controllers; and continuing airworthiness of aircraft and aeronautical products, parts, and appliances. The revisions and updates go into effect on Feb. 22, 2026.

March 31, 2026

Australia: Radio Altimeters and 5G

Starting March 31, 2026, Australian-registered aircraft operators will need to be equipped with radio altimeters that meet minimum performance levels to deter interference by mobile phone 5G service. Before this date, the country's Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) is working with the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to ensure that efforts run smoothly to prevent interference with radio altimeters. CASA is coordinating with ACMA so that the rollout of wireless broadband services, including 5G in the 3.7 to 4.0 GHz band, can be done in a way that ensures the safety of aircraft in Australia. Ongoing mitigations after March 31, 2026, will include a 200 MHz buffer between wireless broadband and radio altimeter frequencies as well as limits on power and unwanted emissions.

For the most current compliance status, see: ainonline.com/compliance

People in Aviation

BY JESSICA REED

ERIC HINSON

FlightSafety International named **Eric Hinson** as CEO; he took over from former president **Barbara Telek**, who retired. Hinson was executive v-p at FlightSafety from 2009 to 2012 and most recently served as president and CEO of Simcom International. He has also held leadership roles at companies such as Honeywell, Gulfstream, and Piaggio Aerospace.

Honeywell has named **Jim Currier** as president and CEO of Honeywell Aerospace and **Craig Arnold** as non-executive board chair for its aerospace division. The appointments prepare the business for its planned spinoff as an independent, publicly-traded company in the second half of 2026. Currier has led Honeywell Aerospace Technologies since 2023 and previously held senior roles across the company, including president of the electronic solutions unit and v-p of airlines for North America. Arnold, former chair and CEO of Eaton, joined Honeywell's board immediately and will assume his new role as chair upon completion of the spinoff.

Daher named **Aymeric Daher** deputy CEO in charge of logistics and HR. Additionally, **Jérôme Leparoux**, company general secretary, was appointed director of group strategy; **Vincent Chanron** took on the role of group human resources director; and **Thibault Scaramanga** was named vice chairman of the board of directors. Aymeric Daher joined the company as a project manager in 2013 and took charge of the Logistics division at the beginning of 2024. Leparoux previously served as the group's general secretary since October 2019, overseeing institutional relations, communications, and legal affairs, and first joined Daher in 2015 as group HR director. Chanron, whose career started at Airbus, was hired as v-p of mergers/acquisitions and marketing/communications at Daher in 2012 and recently served as the company's country director for Japan. Scaramanga, co-founder and CEO of Sloan Finance, succeeds **Olivier Genis** as vice chairman of the board of directors.

THIBAULT SCARAMANGA

LARRY SOLES

Larry Soles is now director of operations for the *Air Charter Safety Foundation*. Previously, Soles was senior director of operational and system safety at Wheels Up, and his career in aviation began as an aircrew member in the U.S. Air Force.

Former Boeing executive **James "J.D." Detwiler** joined *King Aerospace* as v-p of strategy. Detwiler was previously president of Boeing Business Jets and held other leadership roles related to Boeing's defense programs.

UK trade association *ADS* named **Véronique Bardelmann**, v-p of Safran UK and Europe, as v-p for aerospace. As chair of the aerospace sector council, Bardelmann will work closely with the more than 1,200 members of ADS on issues such as supply chain and aircraft backlogs.

After consolidating its aviation business under a unified global structure, *Goodyear Tire & Rubber* promoted **Joe Burke** to v-p of global aviation. Burke has worked at Goodyear for more than 10 years, including positions across the company's commercial and aviation segments.

BILL DOLNY

Bill Dolny, CEO of *MedAire*, has been tapped as vice chair of the International Business Aviation Council's Industry Advisory Forum. Dolny will work closely with **Bruce Parry**, chair of the forum and senior advisor on industry affairs at Bombardier.

A new board of directors and foundation board were named for the *International Aircraft Dealers Association* (*IADA*). Chosen as IADA chair was **John Odegard**, 5x5 Trading partner and co-founder. He worked with NetJets for 18 years and co-founded NetJets' sales and acquisitions company, QS Partners. **Shawn Dinning**, Dallas Jet International senior partner, is now vice chair of IADA. He previously served as chair of AircraftExchange for three years. **Greg Oswald**, Soljets co-founder and partner, was named secretary of the association, while **Nick Schneider**,

Global Wings president and CEO, is now IADA's treasurer. **Suzanne Meiners-Levy** of Advocate Consulting Legal Group was selected as chair of IADA's foundation board, joined by **Shawn Holstein**, vice chair, who is president of Holstein Aviation. **Jay Gantt**, president of Gantt Aviation, was named secretary of the foundation board, and **Heather Wolff Griffin**, Jet Sense Aviation COO and general counsel, was named treasurer.


REX BEVIS

Rex Bevis is now CFO and executive v-p of *Reynolds Jet* after working for 14 years in senior finance and management positions with Delta Private Jets. Reynolds Jet also recently hired licensed CPA **Sierra Mercer** as director of finance and controller. **Scott Miller** was hired as director of operational planning and performance earlier last year, and he is now v-p of customer experience.

Douglas Turk is now president of specialty lines at *Relation Insurance Services* and will oversee the company's growing aviation insurance practice. His 20 years of related experience includes a term as chief marketing officer for a specialty insurance broker and as CEO of risk management company Albert G. Ruben, which was acquired by Relation earlier this year.

Duncan Aviation's aircraft sales and acquisitions team recently gained two members. **James Carroll**, who is based in London, will focus on the EMEA region. He recently served as head of MRO sales for Gama Aviation. **Kirsten Ehrenfried** was named market research analyst for Duncan. She recently managed sales and marketing for two Hotworx locations in Lincoln, Nebraska, and also worked at Fritz + Lloyd Interiors as an executive assistant.


KIRSTEN EHRENFRIED

Aerocor hired **Jeff Berlin**, a pilot, aviation writer, photographer, and filmmaker, as an aircraft broker. In addition to serving as an editor of Plane & Pilot, Pilot Journal, and PilotMag magazines, Berlin worked with Cirrus Aircraft, Garmin Aviation, Daher Aircraft, Avidyne, and Wipaire.

Zach McDonald was hired as general manager for *APP Jet Center* at its location in Fort Pierce, Florida. McDonald previously worked as general manager for Sheltair in Tampa.

FINAL FLIGHT

Pat Epps, a Georgia native and long-time general aviation icon, died on November 14 at the age of 91. A recipient of NBAA's American Spirit Award and NATA's William A. "Bill" Ong Memorial Award and a 2007 Living Legend of Aviation honoree, Epps was the son of Ben Epps, an aviation pioneer and contemporary of the Wright Brothers. Epps enjoyed a long aviation career during which he amassed more than 10,000 flight hours as a commercial pilot. A Georgia Tech graduate with a degree in mechanical engineering, Epps later served as a flight-test engineer for Boeing on the prototype 707. After a stint in the Air Force, he launched Epps Air Service, which grew into a full-service FBO, aircraft charter, and maintenance facility at Atlanta DeKalb-Peachtree Airport (KPDK). He owned the 18-acre facility for nearly six decades until it was sold in 2023 to AeroCenters.

Jerry Holland, 90, founder of the Sheltair FBO chain, passed away on November 18 at his home. With nothing more than a high school diploma, he grew the company from a single FBO to the industry's largest privately-owned aviation network, with nearly 5 million square feet of airport infrastructure spread across 16 locations in four states. Holland—who was described as a simple man with a big vision—began his career in construction in 1963. He entered the aviation arena 20 years later, after a friend sold him a set of hangars at Florida's Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport (KFXE). In 1986, he broke ground on the company's flagship FBO at Fort Lauderdale International Airport (KFLL) and followed that up with a second location, continuing its growth in the Southeast U.S.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Brian Barents, the longtime business aviation and military veteran whose leadership has placed him among the most revered in the industry, will be honored on January 31 with the Wichita Aero Club (WAC) Trophy. Recognized as a Living Legend in Aviation, Barents entered the U.S. Air Force in 1965, becoming a fighter pilot. On the civilian side, he held roles including senior v-p for Cessna Aircraft, where he helped propel the Citation series, and Learjet, where he made a near-bankrupt company profitable. He further led Galaxy Aerospace, helping negotiate its sale to General Dynamics, and was CEO of Aerion. Barents has served on the boards of numerous aviation companies and is a past GAMA chairman.

› continued from page 25

The Career & Learning Center is among the many initiatives that Textron Aviation has ongoing in the area of workforce development and community outreach. Partnering with local schools, the company is involved in multiple areas with Wichita State University.

But one of its efforts that is a focal point is its veterans' outreach programs. Textron Aviation uses multiple avenues for recruitment, such as SkillBridge and Heroes Make America programs that introduce military personnel to civilian manufacturing and other jobs. These are in addition to its other recruitment activities.

Senior manager of HR for military programs John Buckley—a 30-year U.S. Army veteran who was involved in planning efforts in Bosnia, Iraq, and Libya—spearheads recruiting, marketing, and retention efforts at Textron Aviation.

The company believes it is critical to hire veterans for three major reasons: a need (the company faces a workforce shortage along with industry); a requirement (it needs to have a percentage of military personnel for its government contracts—a figure it more than surpasses); and the value that they bring the company: skills, experience, and high operational tempo, Buckley stressed.

"Their culture, the character, is perfectly aligned with our values, and we see that as a strength," he said.

However, recognizing that a transition from military to civilian life is not so simple, Textron Aviation has set in motion a range of activities to ensure that the company is "military ready" rather than just "military friendly," Buckley said.

"In simple terms, being military friendly is that you hire military veterans, but ready goes beyond that. Ready means that you're doing some extra things—you're taking into account, for example, that the transition of military service into the private sector in general and into civilian employment is very complicated, very challenging."

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