



DAVID MCINTOSH

Saudi poised for growth

by Peter Shaw-Smith

“There’s a shortage of charter aircraft in the [Saudi Arabian] market,” said Fahad Al Jarboa, CEO of Saudia Private Aviation (SPA), who was the second-day MEBAA Show keynote speaker. He described SPA’s ambitions for growth, including plans to wet lease up to six business aircraft

in the coming months to meet the burgeoning demand for domestic and international charter in Saudi Arabia. However, he told *AIN*, “Actually, the market is dry. It is very dry. We have 94 percent of charter orders going unsatisfied.”

SPA (Stand 1125) is awaiting the arrival of an Embraer Praetor 500 in the third quarter of next year and has an option on a second. He

hinted that demand for business jets up to Boeing BBJ size is a growing trend, making charter at the individual, rather than delegation level, more likely.

The charter operator already has access to several VIP airliners from parent company Saudi Arabian Airlines’ fleet that it can offer for charter. There’s no need to buy a lot more business aircraft, he explained. “Somebody has aircraft; why not work together and use our air operator certificate?”

continues on page 4 ▶

AAM
Incubator Center
VPorts, GCAA, MBRAH form partnership | 06

BIZLINERS
1st ACJ TwoTwenty
Five Hotels expects delivery soon | 10

TRAFFIC
MENA Activity
WingX offers statistics on business jet flying | 17

Gulf bizav vitality means more and smaller bizjet sales

by Kerry Lynch

Embraer is seeing a notable pick up in activity in the Middle East as interest in business aviation expands across numerous sectors and for aircraft of all sizes, according to Stephen Friedrich, chief commercial officer for Embraer Executive Jets (Static A26).

“We view this region as having significant potential,” Friedrich told *AIN* at the MEBA Show. “It’s always been a consistent source of revenue and sales for us. But we really do view what’s happening—as the economy continues to evolve—as being very positive for the use of business aviation assets. And we see that not just here in the Middle East, but also in the surrounding areas.”

The economic rebound from the pandemic is driven by an uptick in a range of businesses—including financial services, real estate, tourism, along with oil—and that in turn is changing the dynamic for business aviation. “In the past, there’s been a lot of ultra-long-range aircraft that have been in demand here. There still is. But we’re now seeing light, mid, and super-mid demand here,” he said.

This demand has spread through multiple countries in the Middle East and over into India, he added. As for India, growth still will depend on the regulatory environment, but “we’re seeing a strong demand signal come out of there.”

Friedrich noted that Embraer’s Phenom light and midsize Praetor models are particularly suited for the Indian subcontinent because of their robust airframes designed for high utilization. Similarly in Saudi Arabia, these aircraft can get into airports with shorter runways.



DAVID MCINTOSH

Light, midsize, and super-mid-size business jets are increasingly popular in the Middle East, according to Stephen Friedrich, chief commercial officer, Embraer Executive Jets.

“That’s why we brought the Phenom 300E here [to MEBA] because we saw demand in the region for it,” Friedrich said, adding interest in the Gulf is coming from both individual and fleet buyers.

The growth in business activity in the

region has been reflected in the return of the MEBA Show. While not planning order announcements during the show, Friedrich said the event “has been well attended with quality decision-makers. This has been a positive show.”

Middle East is key region for operation and deliveries of Boeing Business Jets

Boeing Business Jets logged four orders and two green and one completed deliveries this year, the company told *AIN* at MEBA 2022. “Next year is looking much stronger, though, as we have a number of what we think are good probability campaigns in work,” said Boeing Business Jets director of marketing Alex Fecteau. “We’ve had a total of 15 BBJ Max orders and delivered eight, with seven in the pipeline to delivery.”

Citing WingX flight data, Fecteau said 34 percent of all BBJ flights arrived or departed in the Middle East between January 2019 and September 2022. WingX’s global business jet moving seven-day average for flights shows global traffic is up 14 percent on 2019 year-to-date, while the Middle East is up 62 percent over the same period.

He called the Middle East a small-market, big-impact arena, playing host to only 2.5 percent of all business jets but with 55 percent of those in the large or bizliner

segments. Boeing identifies a total of around 820 business jets in the Middle East and Africa (MENA) region. The Middle East alone accounts for 25 percent of the worldwide bizliner fleet, or 98 aircraft, he said.

Government, VVIP, charter, and corporate operators in the MENA region are home to 29 percent of the BBJ fleet, with a total of 78 aircraft, 69 of them in the Gulf Cooperation Council. The UAE accounts for 30; Saudi Arabia, 29; three each in Bahrain and Qatar; two each in Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Morocco; and one each in Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey. There are 44 head-of-state widebody aircraft in the Middle East, of which Boeing claims 32 BBJ types.

The Middle East is also home to 50 percent of all widebody BBJs. There are three BBJs on static display this week at the MEBA Show: a privately owned BBJ2, Royal Jet BBJ, and Comlux’s BBJ767-200ER SkyLady.

P.S.-S.

www.amacaerospace.com



THE PERFECT PLACE FOR BUSINESS AIRCRAFT

AUCH • LONDON • BASEL • ZURICH • ISTANBUL • BODRUM • BEIRUT • RIYADH

AMAC AEROSPACE



DAVID MCINTOSH

Although MEBAA 2022 wasn't the largest event on the aviation show circuit, it attracted a dedicated group of attendees who took their time to walk the hall and static display and learn about the products and services that make business aviation fly, not only in the Middle East but everywhere in the world.

Dornier Seawings to enter Middle East market

by Matt Thurber

Dornier Seawings (Stand 225) has signed an agreement with Gulf Enterprises to bring the FAA-certified Seastar amphibious twin-engine aircraft to the Middle East market. The two companies will partner on sales and marketing, operations and maintenance, and support.

The \$7.21 million (2017 \$) Seastar is undergoing upgrades in preparation for EASA approval in 2023 before service entry in 2024. Major changes include a Honeywell Epic 2.0 avionics suite with four large displays, new flight control actuation system, and revised landing gear design. Two 650-shp Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6-135A engines are fitted in fore-and-aft inline thrust configuration on the top of the fuselage.

According to co-CEO Jürgen Heinrich, the airframe is made of glass fiber composites that are far more resistant to corrosion, and there is no airframe life limit. The turboprop twin's maximum takeoff weight is now 11,240 pounds and it carries 363 gallons of jet-A.

With space for six passengers in VIP configuration or nine passengers in a corporate layout, the Seastar's maximum speed is 180 kts. Range is nearly 900 nm with VFR reserves.

Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany-based Dornier sees three key markets for the Seastar: luxury travel, for example, to resort areas; executive travel; and special-mission use for safety and security. An advantage of the Seastar is that it can safely operate in up to six-foot waves, according to Heinrich, so rescues can be accomplished in adverse conditions at distances that helicopters can't reach.

"Expanding our sales network to the Middle East, by partnering with Gulf Enterprises, is a key strategic decision that brings the next-gen Seastar to its natural environment that we are looking forward to embrace," he said. ■



Jürgen Heinrich, co-CEO of Dornier Seawings, and a model of the Seastar amphibious airplane.

DAVID MCINTOSH

Saudi Arabia charter will grow

› continued from page 1

Al Jarboa said it is difficult to assess which lessors have availability. "We're negotiating," he said. "Actually, we're in discussion to have something within the next two months. We will start with one or two aircraft, just to meet immediate demand. Ideally, we should have, between owned and wet-leased, at least four to six aircraft."

SPA sold off six Falcon 7Xs over the past four years, as well as a number of its Hawker 400XPs, as these aircraft weren't a great fit operationally.

In his remarks, Al Jarboa stressed the central plank of the Vision 2030 plan. "I don't want to sound negative, but Saudi Arabia was not easily accessible in the past," he said. "It wasn't easy to do business, due to lack of regulations and, maybe, lack of synchronization between the different government agencies. Vision 2030 has a number of programs and initiatives to get the government to work as one entity to facilitate the environment for doing business, to make it easier for operators and everyone else to come and do business in Saudi Arabia."

"Saudi Arabia has a pretty under-penetrated look about it," WingX managing director Richard Koe acknowledged during the MEBAA Show session. ■



01-02 March 2023
Sheikh Saeed Hall 2 - 3
Dubai World Trade Centre, UAE

We pre-arrange meetings for exhibitors with key airline buyers at the show. Contact us to learn more:



CONNECTING THE AIRLINE SUPPLY CHAIN



Co-located with:



Organised by AVIATION WEEK NETWORK and TATSUS

AIRFRAME MAINTENANCE | AVIONICS | CABIN TECHNOLOGIES | CLEANING | ENGINEERING | FLOORING | FUTURE CABIN CONCEPTS
GALLEY | IFEC | IT SYSTEMS | LIGHTING | SAFETY | SANITISATION | SEATING | SUPPLY CHAIN | TEXTILES | TOOLING

WWW.AIME.AERO



DAVID MCINTOSH

L-R: Tahnoon Saif, CEO of Mohammed bin Rashid Aerospace Hub at Dubai South, joined Dr. Fethi Chebil, CEO and founder of VPorts, and Walid Ibrahim Al Rahmani, assistant director general of strategy and international affairs for the UAE General Civil Aviation Authority, in detailing the planned AAM hub.

Dubai center to foster emerging AAM sector

by Chad Trautvetter

Vertiport infrastructure provider VPorts is partnering with the UAE General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA; Stand 900) and Mohammed bin Rashid Aerospace Hub (MBRAH; Stand 950) at Dubai South on an advanced air mobility (AAM) incubator. Set to open in 2024, the hub will include dedicated flight-testing airspace, assigned block airspace, and new technologies to foster the burgeoning AAM industry.

VPorts has signed a 25-year lease, renewable for another 25 years, with MBRAH to establish the \$40 million AAM center on a 37,000-sq-m site within Dubai South. Construction will start next year, with operations and flight testing to follow a year later.

According to MBRAH CEO Tahnoon Saif, the center is expected to generate \$7 billion in direct revenues over the initial lease period and create 1,500 high-paying direct jobs. “This first-of-its-kind center will enable and support worldwide electric vertical takeoff and landing [eVTOL] aircraft manufacturers and operators with flight testing facilities in all conditions. It will also position Dubai as a world leader in AAM,” he added.

As part of the agreement, Canada-based VPorts will partner with private investors to deliver AAM infrastructure, development, and operations, allowing multiple revenue streams for the center. Nexa Capital Partners is leading the initial funding round, gathering a consortium of already active AAM investors.

GCAA director general Saif Mohammed Al Suwaidi explained that the agency’s plan is to cultivate a cluster for the AAM ecosystem “to thrive and grow this new entrant mode of transportation globally from a hub right here in Dubai.”

VPorts will deploy its vertiport operation control center (VOCC) hub at the AAM incubator to manage air traffic integration and set up communication protocols between eVTOLs, vertiports, and air navigation service providers. The center will also employ artificial intelligence to access data for resource management, ensuring efficient sequencing of eVTOLs landing, taking off, and transiting between vertiports.

By 2030, VPorts expects to expand its vertiport network to include all major industrial areas in the UAE, including Dubai South, Jebel Ali, Sharjah, and Ras Al-Khaimah, permitting eVTOL air-taxi operations throughout the country.

EAG building global HQ at Dubai South

Dubai-based private aviation services company Empire Aviation Group (EAG; Static S4) signed an agreement Tuesday at MEBAA 2022 with the Mohammed bin Rashid Aerospace Hub (MBRAH; Stand 950) at Dubai South to develop a new, multipurpose business aviation facility adjacent to the site’s VIP Terminal.

EAG will own, manage, and operate the facility, which it will also fully finance, with work due to start next year and completion expected in 2024.

The mixed-use facility will include EAG’s new global corporate headquarters, as well as operations control, CAMO, and a crew check-in and briefing area.

The scheme also provides for premium office space for aviation and related companies, luxury retail food and beverage outlets, and a rooftop lounge for events and entertainment.

“Since 2007, Empire Aviation has been focusing on business aviation with a mission to increase corporate use of private jets for business travel and we have developed into a truly global business,” said EAG founder and managing director Paras Dhamecha. “The facility will meet the super high-quality standards expected in Dubai and support MBRAH’s vision to make Dubai the aviation capital of the world.”

Added MBRAH CEO Tahnoon Saif: “This agreement reiterates our mandate to attract the top players in the industry to establish their presence at MBRAH and benefit from our ecosystem to connect with global markets.”

P.S.-S.



MBRAH CEO Tahnoon Saif (l) and EAG founder Paras Dhamecha (r) at MEBAA

Aircraft Interiors | **EXPO**[®]

6 - 8 JUNE 2023
HAMBURG, GERMANY

BUSINESS JET INTERIORS TAKE OFF AT AIX NEW FOR 2023

Discover the latest in business jet interior design,
technology & equipment in the new
Business Jet Interiors Zone.

AIX is the definitive marketplace where everyone involved
in developing cabin interiors needs to be.

For more information: aircraftinteriorexpo.com

Airbus Heli books order from Falcon Aviation

by Mark Huber

Airbus Helicopters continues to make market inroads in the Middle East, announcing an order from Falcon Aviation Services and a services contract from The Helicopter Company on Tuesday at MEBAE 2022.

Falcon Aviation Services—an Emirati air charter and sightseeing helicopter tour operator—ordered five H130 large-cabin singles for delivery over the next year. Its Falcon Tours division will use the seven-passenger helicopters for sightseeing flights.

Located at Abu Dhabi's Al Bateen Executive Airport and Dubai Al Maktoum International Airport, Falcon provides operational and support services including oil and gas



DAVID MCINTOSH

Falcon Aviation Services has placed an order with Airbus Helicopters for five H130s that will be used for sightseeing flights. MEBAE 2022 visitors can view a mockup of the helicopter at the Airbus stand.

support, MRO services, business jet charters, helicopter sightseeing tours, FBO, aircraft management and continuing airworthiness management, and heliport management and inspection.

Saudi Arabia's The Helicopter Company signed an HCare maintenance contract with Airbus Helicopters to cover its fleet of H160 intermediate twins.

The Helicopter Company was established by the Kingdom's Private Investment Fund to meet its growing demand for luxury tourism and air travel services. The company previously signed agreements to buy Airbus helicopters, including 10 H125 singles and 20 H145 twins to be deployed across Saudi Arabia for aerial work and air ambulance duty. ■

Airbus sees potential for ACJ TwoTwenty in Mideast

by Peter Shaw-Smith

Airbus Corporate Jets racked up six orders and five deliveries worldwide this year and expects to deliver its first ACJ TwoTwenty to a Dubai-based customer in the upcoming first quarter, company commercial v-p Chadi Saade said Tuesday at MEBAE 2022.

It expects to sell 15 ACJs in the next five years to Middle Eastern government, VIP, and charter operators. Today, it has a pipeline of 15 ACJ TwoTwenties under completion by Comlux at its Indianapolis, Indiana facility for delivery over the next four years.

"There is strong sales potential for this aircraft in the region," Saade said. "It will be important to show it around the world. It has opened the door to many new customers for us."

ACJ is reporting a significant spike in traffic for its business jets year to date—up 42 percent versus the same period in 2019, in terms of the number of departures in the Middle East. Saade said this had made regional charter very complicated due to a lack of aircraft availability.

Worldwide, he said Airbus had one commitment and two deliveries on the ACJ330, one delivery and three orders on the ACJ320neo family, and two deliveries and two orders for the ACJ TwoTwenty so far in 2022.

The ACJ TwoTwenty offers three times the cabin space of a conventional business jet and a 5,650-nm range. The first completed TwoTwenty will be delivered to Five Hotels & Resorts in Dubai early next year.

According to Saade, the Middle East is

a very important, but cyclical, market. And with about half of the 270 bizliners in the region over 15 years old, the market is ripe for replacement orders. "These aircraft need to be replaced, and a decision needs to be taken in the [near] future," he said.

Annual global bizliner deliveries peaked in 2009 at 19, with 2015 marginally trailing that at 17 units. Bizliner shipments are expected to continue to rise in the next decade from the six delivered so far this year. The Middle East is the top global market for Airbus bizliners, with the region playing host to 130 ACJs out of a total worldwide fleet of 420.

ACJ also announced Tuesday an agreement with U.S.-based Citadel Completions to enter the ACJ service center network. "Citadel will provide to ACJ customers a wide spectrum of capabilities, including maintenance, engineering, modification, and upgrade services," Airbus Corporate Jets said. Its existing service center network includes Comlux Indianapolis, Sabena Technics Bordeaux, Jet Aviation Basel and Dubai, and Haeco Xiamen. ■



FutureFlight

THE FUTURE OF ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY

**NEWS, DATA AND ANALYSIS COVERING ALL ASPECTS
OF THE ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY MARKET
INCLUDING INVESTMENTS, INFRASTRUCTURE,
AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURERS, SUPPLIERS AND MORE!**

FutureFlight.aero



Sign up for our free newsletter.



Five Hotels ready for 1st ACJ

by Peter Shaw-Smith

Dubai's Five Hotels and Resorts is taking a close interest in the completion work being carried out by Comlux Aviation on its ACJ TwoTwenty at the Switzerland-based company's facility in Indianapolis. Five Hotels founder and chairman Kabir Mulchandani told **AIN** that he expects the aircraft to be delivered on time in January.

"Five has a team focused on monitoring the completion process of 9H-FIVE on a week-to-week basis," he said. "Our own technical expert makes periodic visits to the completion center in Indianapolis...to provide real-time feedback."

He added that his company's ACJ TwoTwenty, which will be the first of a batch of 16 Airbus



The first ACJ TwoTwenty for launch customer Five Hotels will feature two 55-inch screens, a master suite with shower, and 16 passenger seats.

Corporate Jets that Comlux will complete, is equipped with Pratt & Whitney engines and provides 16 passenger seats, a dining table for eight, a master suite with a king-sized bed and shower,

electro-chromatic window shades, LED lighting, a fully equipped kitchen, high-speed connectivity, and two 55-inch video screens.

"Five's feedback on enhancing the customer

flying experience—for example, improvements of the luxe seats and specifying Five-styled requirements for the interior design—has all been adopted," Mulchandani said. "This up-to-date infrastructure [allows] for a state-of-the-art experience that can last up to 12 hours nonstop with a full crew on board."

He said that based on Five's latest project check, he was optimistic that Comlux would deliver the aircraft on schedule, a view that has also been expressed by Comlux executive chairman and CEO Richard Gaona.

"Five has reimagined the very best in sky-high travel," Mulchandani said. "As with the Five properties on the ground—Five Palm Jumeirah, Five Jumeirah Village, both in Dubai, and Five Zurich—the ACJ TwoTwenty cabin [allows]...passengers to dine, entertain, and invigorate [themselves] in the most opulent and private environment." ■

Garmin certifies GI 275 as 7X backup instrument



Two round Garmin GI 275 electronic instruments take up a small amount of space in the Falcon 7X instrument panel.

The FAA has issued a supplemental type certificate (STC) for installation of Garmin's GI 275 electronic flight instrument in the Dassault Falcon 7X, replacing the original secondary flight

display. This is the first dedicated GI 275 STC for a Part 25-certified business jet. Other Falcon model STCs are planned, as well as an approved model list STC to cover a variety of Part 25 aircraft.

According to Garmin, the upgrade could include two GI 275s—one as primary and configured as an attitude-direction indicator (ADI) with synthetic vision system information and another on the copilot's side configured as a multifunction display.

Both GI 275s are integrated with existing systems in the 7X, including flight control, inertial navigation, air data, and flight management systems.

When configured as the ADI or primary instrument, the GI 275 can display flight path, attitude, heading, altitude, airspeed, and vertical speed, along with localizer, ILS, and VOR approach cues. The copilot's GI 275 can

display backup GPS information in case the aircraft's GPS sensors fail.

As a multifunction display, the copilot's GI 275 has pages with a course deviation indicator and horizontal situation indicator with or without a moving map. On the map, pilots can view terrain, obstacles, traffic, airspace, airways, SafeTaxi diagrams, and information about waypoints and points of interest.

GI 275s include Bluetooth, which can be used to facilitate flight plan transfer from the aircraft's flight management system to the Garmin Pilot EFB app. Pilots can also update the GI 275 nav database via Wi-Fi with a smart device using Garmin's Connex and Database Concierge services. **M.T**

Let EASy IV fly with Falcons

by James Wynbrandt

Dassault Aviation introduced EASy IV, the fourth generation of its EASy flight deck, at October's NBAA-BACE. It features more vivid displays, greater processing power, and added safety features.

"EASy IV will enable [owners and operators] to bring their operations up to the latest industry standards and significantly enhance their aircraft value," said Carlos Brana, executive v-p of civil aircraft for Dassault (Static A21).

Based on a Honeywell Primus Epic system, EASy IV will be standard on the Falcon 6X, which is due to enter service by mid-2023, as well as on all new-build Falcon 8Xs also starting in 2023. It will also be available as an upgrade retrofit on earlier Falcon 7Xs and 8Xs.

EASy IV upgrades include an advanced interactive navigation map with improved airspace depiction and terrain resolution, which in combination with a new interactive vertical situation display provides a better picture of thunderstorm vertical development. On the ground,

2D/3D airport moving maps give a sharp display of runways, taxiways, ramps, and other airport features, making ground navigation easier at crowded airports and reducing the risk of runway incursions.

Additionally, a new TCAS system includes ADS-B In and Out, enabling pilots to see traffic in the air and on the airport map. Operators can also add SiriusXM weather products, which cover all of the U.S., Canada, and the Caribbean, and include graphic and text weather data.

Combined with the latest version of Honeywell's NextGen



Pilots will appreciate EASy IV's 2D and 3D depiction of the airport surface and detailed terrain on the moving map.

FMS, EASy IV also provides new RNP AR approaches for improved access to runways affected by terrain or high-density traffic. Meanwhile, new graphic CPDLC features provide seamless data

communications for different phases of flight.

New Jeppesen chart features are also integrated into EASy IV, including a night mode that keeps an even light level on the flight deck during night approaches and a new panoramic mode with an aircraft symbol georeferenced to approach charts. ■

Lack of recency is a safety risk factor for flight departments

In 2021, nearly a third of AviationManuals' clients identified lack of recency as a risk factor for their operations, according to data analyzed by the flight department manual and safety services specialist. Lack of recency among pilots occurs when they haven't been flying for a period and may miss performing tasks once they return to the flight deck. "It's just basic things like memory items," AviationManuals senior adviser Kevin Honan told *AIN*, "and they need a little bit of refreshing to get back up to speed and make sure everybody's safe." He suspects that much of the lack of recency issue centers around the Covid-19 pandemic, which idled a lot of aircraft for several months. Data for the analysis came from AviationManuals' flight risk assessment tool that is a part of the company's ARC safety management system (SMS) software. Specifically, the information was culled from 17,000 risk assessments submitted through the system.

"We worked with operators and pulled the information from our risk-assessment tool to see general trends on this data and see where we could help them come up with mitigations for it," Honan added.

Some flight departments have policies to pair less-experienced captains with more-experienced pilots to overcome lack of recency. "It's almost like a mentorship program. They come up to speed under that experience," he said.

But not all flight departments have the same resources. For smaller operators, another means to alleviate lack of recency is to climb onto the flight deck and run through departure and arrival procedures in a simulated environment. There are other steps that flight departments can implement as well. One is to plan daytime departures and avoid flying at night "when there's a circadian low," Honan said. Another is to take extra time on preflight briefings, spending "a lot more time to just make sure you're checking all the boxes." J.S.





Embraer's Praetor 500 is ideal for serving European customers, but also regional markets in Africa.

JetHQ says Eastern Africa expansion is paying off

by Peter Shaw-Smith

Business jet sales brokerage JetHQ opened an office in Egypt in 2020 to cover East Africa and is now active across the continent. “That same pent-up demand for travel that we saw in other parts of the world is really poised to hit Africa in the next 12 months,” Garrett Jerde, JetHQ’s founder and managing director, told *AIN*.

“Africa is a region where we have already been expanding our operations, and that’s paid off the past two years,” he added. “There’s a bigger opportunity now as business and private

aviation travel picks back up post-pandemic.”

Overall, Jerde forecasts more external visits to Africa in 2023, with businesses on the continent supporting that growth. “Everyone’s discovering the airlines aren’t able to solve increased travel demands, and Africa is no exception,” he said. “As the corporate aviation community matures, the infrastructure is improving, meaning better, smaller airports that make continental travel easier.”

South Africa has always been a good market for business aviation, and JetHQ is now seeing growth in other areas to match. The oil

and energy-producing Central and West Africa region—including Nigeria, Togo, and Benin—are all in a good position to grow their aviation businesses, he noted. “We know corporate aviation is a huge asset for oil-producing nations and we will be there to help them take advantage of aircraft as business tools,” Jerde added.

JetHQ is also seeing a rise in transcontinental travel from Africa’s east coast to Asia. Much of that was suspended or limited during the pandemic and is now starting to return.

“This is fueling demand for larger jets than we have seen in years past,” he said. “We’re now looking at inventory to essentially replace airliners going between major cities, such as Durban, to India or China. Some of that travel is being boosted outside of typical business needs by people not being able to see family or relatives in other countries for so long.”

Other places to witness intra-continental aviation growth include Botswana and Kenya, where demand for light jets and turboprops is stronger. North Africa is also seen as a growth opportunity.

“We have always challenged misperceptions about business aviation in Africa,” Jerde said. “It’s one of the reasons we’ve been active in the continent throughout our ten-year history. We have been eager to serve the needs of people and businesses in the region when others have not been. As infrastructure continues to improve, we don’t see regulatory obstacles being an issue in growing business here.” ■

Royal Jet adds 13th Boeing Business Jet to charter fleet

Abu Dhabi, UAE-based charter firm Royal Jet has added another Boeing Business Jet (BBJ), bringing the total number of such aircraft in its fleet to 13. Although it manages other aircraft in its BBJ portfolio, the group in this case has purchased the 19-passenger bizliner. Royal Jet,



which is the largest BBJ operator in the world, made this announcement last month at the Abu Dhabi Air Expo.

Company CEO Mohammed Husain Ahmed said that throughout the last 12 months, demand had exceeded supply in the region’s premium aviation sector. “The overall health of the global private jet market has been strong, and growth is expected to increase as we move into a very busy period packed with events and conferences,” he noted.

According to Ahmed, the UAE’s leadership wished to support tourism and global trade by investing in building a strong logistics sector. In addition, he said the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, which started about three weeks ago and ends later this month, has led to a surge in demand for air charter in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

“In line with the UAE leadership’s vision, we are actively looking to expand our operations to serve our premium clientele,” Ahmed said. “Adding the new BBJ is a step in that direction.” Royal Jet also operates two Bombardier Global 5000s. **P.S.S**

Vertis Aviation sees trends shifting for bizav in Africa

by Peter Shaw-Smith

Jeff Emmenis, CEO of Switzerland-based Vertis Aviation, said the company is now delivering personalized air charter services to customers flying within Africa after seeing a shift in trends because some primary customers, in terms of revenue, hailed from the continent of Africa and not just Europe.

“Our clients are also based across the European continent and they appreciate our experience and knowledge about how business aviation works in Africa,” he told *AIN*. “We are flying for many European and Middle Eastern companies coming to the continent for business, too.”

Vertis continues to expand its African presence and the continent is a prime focus for the business. “Two of our founders come from Africa so it has always been part of our legacy,” Emmenis noted. “And as business aviation takes on a new perception across the continent, the sector continues to grow.”

A reduced commercial fleet means there are transport gaps that business aviation is filling, he believes, adding. “This has been a factor in driving our charter business in Africa, and we are supporting more business and government flights than leisure flights in this part of the world.”

As economies grow and more wealth is generated, Vertis has welcomed an increasing number

of new clients in Africa during the past 12 months. “It is becoming a more acceptable way of moving across the continent,” he said. “The pandemic spurred some countries to speed permit processing, which has helped enable more flights. It still has a long way to go, but this is a good change for all.”

Local companies aspire to international standards of service, Emmenis said. “We have to manage expectations as there are still very few FBOs, but we note that more public-private partnerships are looking to develop more services to support the industry. This all helps with the overall perception of flight in the region.”



Vertis Aviation CEO Jeff Emmenis is optimistic about bizav in Africa.

African business aviation presents a dynamic landscape, he said. “Existing countries, such as Nigeria, Côte D’Ivoire, South Africa, and Angola, continue to strengthen, while other new markets—including Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Cameroon—are emerging as business aviation destinations.”

“We are seeing increased amounts of movements between northern Europe and Africa to support inward investment and business across the continent. Our strategy is to explore new countries in Europe where demand for air charter to Africa is growing. The number of customers traveling from the UK, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland to Africa is growing,” Emmenis noted.

A reduction in commercial

routes, the general difficulty in traveling within Africa, and the burgeoning economies and opportunities in different regions of the continent are all contributing

to the optimism, according to Emmenis. Meanwhile, he added, mining, hydrocarbons, agriculture, communications, and construction are all driving a rise in private aviation.

“Business aviation is the only convenient way to reduce travel times from days to hours, often more efficiently and certainly with more security and discretion,” he concluded. ■

Hadid joins MEBAA board

Dubai, UAE-based trip support firm Hadid International Services (Stand 350) has officially joined the governing board of the Middle East Business Aviation Association (MEBAA). “Hadid is a business aviation pioneer in the Middle East, and represents something about the region,” commercial director Issa Zuriqi told *AIN*. “While we were not a founding member, we always wanted to be a board member.”

MEBAA founding and executive chairman Ali Alnaqbi confirmed Hadid’s appointment. The association was established in 2006 and, although it was set up as early as 1981, Hadid did not become an active partner until 2008. Many employees have left to set up similar and competing concerns, but as the oldest, Hadid remains the most venerable presence in the region’s flight-support sector. It provides international flight planning, ground support, air charter, executive aviation terminals, as well as travel and concierge services, leveraging an international network and relationships



with strategic partners and suppliers.

Hadid said it was joining an illustrious group of existing board members that include Airbus Corporate Jets, Boeing Business Jets, Bombardier, Dassault Aviation, Emirates-CAE Flight Training, ExecuJet Middle East, Gulfstream Aerospace, Jet Aviation Management, Jetex, Lufthansa Technik, Royal Jet, Saudia Private Aviation, and UAS International Trip Support. “This gives MEBAA a robust and growing platform that extends across the regional business aviation sector,” Zuriqi said. **P.S.S**

Lufthansa Technik is ready for opportunity

by Peter Shaw-Smith

Since Covid began, Luftnansa Technik's VIP and head-of-state aircraft completion and maintenance businesses have remained stable but there are opportunities for growth, not only in the Middle East but other parts of the world. The company sometimes sees demand for bigger, as well as head-of-state, aircraft in North and South America, and has delivered aircraft for governments in these regions.

A number of aircraft are located in Central America and the Caribbean because their tail numbers and registrations are domiciled there, but they are often destined for customers elsewhere in the world. "The Cayman Islands and other jurisdictions [nearby] are very often used for aircraft registration when the customer actually comes from another part of the world," said Wieland Timm, v-p of sales. "Many aircraft are registered in Central America or the Caribbean, but outfitted or maintained by Luftnansa Technik in Europe."

From its Hamburg headquarters, Luftnansa Technik VIP services aircraft only from Airbus and Boeing, usually starting with the A320 or the 737 families. "We also intend to initiate services for the Airbus A220, because that aircraft is in our fleet," said Timm. "We want to step

into the VIP and government markets for the A220. We do not offer maintenance or outfit services on the smaller Gulfstreams, Bombardiers, and other business-jet types, except interior solutions like cabin management or entertainment systems."

Demand is limited to three individual customers a year for such aircraft. Airbus sells aircraft with a factory cabin (but outfitted by partner Comlux) for the A220, called the ACJ TwoTwenty. "If a customer is interested, we can offer aircraft production programs and products," he said.

Timm is positive about the outlook for the market for VIP and government aircraft in the coming 12 months.

"Some customers will purchase new aircraft, as the Boeing 737 Max has now obtained certification clearance for all customer types," he said. "There will be increasing demand, and in the next five years many customers will order specific Boeings. The Airbus [ACJ TwoTwenty] will also attract attention—it is an attractive aircraft. It has a bigger cabin than a similarly-priced Bombardier or Gulfstream and offers more comfort. Its appealing pricing dynamics could interest North American clientele."

The ACJ TwoTwenty is priced in the \$70 million range and its 5,600-nm range

capability, while not suitable for ultra-long-range trips, does fit the needs of Middle East-Europe travelers.

However, Timm does not believe that the ACJ TwoTwenty will challenge the A320 family, as it cannot provide the range certain customers require. "The [ACJ TwoTwenty] is perfect for intercontinental travel in North America. But customers who are doing business often need to fly internationally: China to the U.S., or the U.S. to the Middle East. On a typical route, you need an aircraft with additional range. This can only be done by the A320 family or Boeing 737s—or a Gulfstream, Bombardier, or similar. The Global 7500 or new 8000 and similar aircraft also have the range, but limited space. That's the difference [with a bizliner]."

In terms of BBJ Max sales, he estimates that there are not that many BBJ Maxs in the global private jet market. Even as the aircraft's credibility is restored after its grounding due to issues with the flight control system, he thinks it will be a while before the program takes off.

"They normally produce four to six aircraft per year for the VIP market," Timm said. "The longer-term target could be to manufacture around ten a year. This is totally different from airline orders like Southwest's for five hundred Maxs, putting more than 1,000 into service. This is, for airlines, easy to do. VIP will pick up because in total around 150 BBJs entered service since 1999. The amount in service is limited, though."

Timm is pleased to note that Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine have not led to any decrease in demand for Lufthansa Technik's services. "We are always fully booked," he said.

"Last year was the best we ever had, year two of Covid, it was a success," Timm noted. "Normally, a lot of cargo is transported in passenger airliners. Many aircraft were grounded, logistics costs exploded, and parts availability collapsed. Some companies also saw production lines for specific parts decrease, due to factory closures or employee layoffs in the wake of increased sickness rates."

There was also a tremendous increase in prices. "Due to the Ukrainian situation, energy costs have exploded," he said. "Annual price increases range between 10 to 100 percent. This is a tremendous challenge and will continue to impact pricing. You can't avoid it. We will find a solution. I don't worry about the forthcoming winter in Germany. It's clear that it will cost more money for everybody. Whatever role the government plays, everyone will face a rising cost of living." ■



A Lufthansa Technik completion concept called the Explorer turns an Airbus A330 into a globetrotting platform for a variety of unique experiences.



2023
HAI HELI-EXPO

BY HELICOPTER ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL



Celebrate!

REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

HAI HELI-EXPO March 6–9
Exhibits Open March 7–9
heliexpo.com



SCAN AND REGISTER TODAY!

Space available.
Apply Now!

London Biggin Hill Airport reaps investment rewards

by Kate Sarsfield

London Biggin Hill Airport—the UK capital’s number-two business aviation hub—continues to attract VIP aircraft owners and operators from all over the world, including the Middle East, for which London is a key destination.

Heavy investment in the airport—a former wartime airbase 18 kilometers (11.2 miles) from central London—has been a driving force behind Biggin Hill’s appeal to domestic and international business aircraft travelers. “Our vision for the airport is bold,” Biggin Hill commercial director Robert Walters noted. “But we are committed to providing high-end services for the business aviation community and retaining our position as one of the leading business aviation hubs not only in the UK but in Europe, too.”

Today, Biggin Hill and rival Farnborough Airport—London’s top business aviation hub located 55 kilometers southwest of London—account for more than 50 percent of corporate aircraft traffic coming into the British capital, Walters noted. Moreover, Biggin Hill is on track to record its strongest year ever in 2022 with more than 26,000 movements expected by year-end. This smashes the airport’s previous record of around 19,000 takeoffs and landings in 2019.

Walters attributes some of this success to Biggin Hill’s decision not to shut down during the Covid pandemic. This, he explained, helped to magnify the benefits of business aviation airports over their commercial aviation counterparts. “The pandemic provided a kick-start for Biggin Hill rather than a brake and also magnified both the resilience and the benefits of our industry,” said Walters.

Contributing to Biggin Hill’s success are first-time entrants to the business aviation market. Stymied by the commercial airlines, many travelers who could afford the expense opted for the ease of turning up at a private terminal and boarding an aircraft that they regarded as a more Covid-safe environment than a commercial airliner.

“Even when lockdown restrictions were lifted, international carriers began canceling

flights at short notice and withdrawing unprofitable routes,” said Walters, “so many of their previously loyal passengers who needed a reliable form of air travel for leisure or business made a permanent switch to private aviation.”

Heavy investment in the site has also played a pivotal role in attracting business. “We have made great strides in a remarkably short time,” Walters claimed. “If you look back just five years, we are a completely different airport. Gone are the general aviation movements; now Biggin Hill is solely dedicated to business aviation.”

Infrastructure development has taken center



Bombardier’s new Biggin Hill MRO facility, with a 650,000-sq-ft hangar, began operating prior to the grand-opening ceremony in November.

stage in the airport’s strategic game plan, with the aim of attracting not just business aircraft travelers to Biggin Hill, but also tenants that can offer high-quality, third-party services such as aircraft sales, maintenance, aircraft management, and charter.

Biggin Hill already has an impressive lineup of residents. These include motor-racing giant Formula 1; helicopter operator and maintenance provider Castle Air; charter and management company Zenith; Pilatus and Tecnam Aircraft distributor and service center Oriens; fixed-base operator Jetex; and completions firm Jet MS. Bombardier, the anchor tenant, recently completed construction of its maintenance, repair, and overhaul facility at the airport.

Located on the east side of the airport, Bombardier’s new base consists of 650,000 sq ft of apron space and a 250,000-sq-ft hangar that can house 14 ultra-long-range Global

7500s simultaneously.

The structure replaces Bombardier’s Hangar 510, which was purchased last year by Lithuanian business aviation services company Avia Solutions, owner of brands such as broker Chapman Freeborn and VIP charter operator KlasJet. That followed Avia’s purchase in 2021 of Biggin Hill-based painting and completions firm RAS Group. RAS has since been rebranded Jet MS Completions.

At EBACE in May, it was announced that Dubai-headquartered Jetex will replace Signature as the tenant of the VIP terminal section of the building. The rebranded facility opened last month.

Meanwhile, Biggin Hill’s on-site hotel is scheduled to open in January. Called the Landing, the four-star, 56-guest-room facility is located next to Hangar 510 on the perimeter of the airport.

Other infrastructure plans include the construction of a third airport-owned hangar with building work scheduled to begin in second-quarter 2023.

Work on a £4 million (\$4.5 million) hangar development project for Oriens has begun. The facility will house maintenance, repair, and overhaul services for its Pilatus and Tecnam aircraft customers.

Castle Air, which operates a popular helicopter shuttle to central London, is expanding its maintenance facility, and there are plans for a VIP terminal to replace the existing 1950s-era main airport building.

The airport’s main taxiway is being resurfaced and expanded to accommodate the extra aircraft at the site, while approval of a new instrument approach for Runway 3—designed to add capability at both ends of its main runway—is imminent. ■

Lebanon economic crisis hobbles bizav sector

by Peter Shaw-Smith

A wholesale economic crisis that has buffeted Lebanon for three years has made life difficult for the nation's business aviation sector, an industry official said on the eve of this year's MEBA Show.

Lebanon is experiencing hyperinflation as a result of an ongoing economic crisis that has affected the country since the end of 2019, according to independent news outlet 961, which has tracked the currency's struggles. On November 28, black market traders in Lebanon were selling the U.S. dollar for LBP40,300 and buying it for LBP40,350.

Before the crisis, the exchange rate was around \$1 to LBP1,500. "The Lebanese lira [pound] has lost more than 90 percent of its

value," the website said.

According to 961, a bank rate of \$1 to LBP8,000 amounted to the freezing of the accounts of Lebanese citizens and the release into the market of a limited supply of U.S. dollars.

Cedar Executive Airport's FBO, Cedar Jet Center, has borne the brunt of the downturn, while business aviation flights have been buoyed by the creation of alternative routes, due to the coronavirus pandemic, Randa Kammoun, Cedar Executive's director of sales and ground operations, told AIN. "The Lebanese market has changed amid the pandemic and we are mostly operating for non-Lebanese passengers.

"Business has yet to return to normal in spite of loosening Covid restrictions, due to the tough economic crisis and political

tension," she said. "However, [charter] operator Cedar Executive has not been affected, with increasing demands for business flights, especially since the pandemic opened up new markets."

She said traffic rights for Lebanese operators in Europe were restricted and this is an unfair step in the face of Lebanon's downturn, especially given the treatment European operators enjoy across the Middle East and North Africa. "We are noticing less demand for business jet travel in Lebanon mainly due to the economic crisis, as a number of high-net-worth individuals have left the country. On the other side, we have a new market since Lebanon is well located geo-strategically and positioning times are acceptable."

Cedar Jet Executive continues to operate two Embraer Legacy 500s, but the delivery of a Praetor model has been delayed given difficulties in acquiring new aircraft.

"I have deep confidence that Lebanon will rise again," Kammoun said. "The Lebanese people have the will and ability to overcome their struggles and move on." ■

Business jet flight activity peaks in MENA

During a presentation on Tuesday at MEBA 2022, WingX managing director Richard Koe updated attendees on business jet traffic growth since November 2019, highlighting factors that have affected activity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

"The pandemic created a record new peak in flight activity," he said. While the MENA region accounted for only 1.3 percent of worldwide activity from November 2019 through November 2022, "it is growing quickly," he added, up 10 percent over the period.

There are 426 business jets based in the MENA region, representing 1.4 percent of the global fleet. More than two-thirds of those are long-range jets, although deliveries of smaller jets have grown 15 to 20 percent. An interesting development is that sector lengths of MENA business jet trips have dropped on routes to Europe and grown for connections within the region.

Driving the growth in business jet activity in MENA is the drop in scheduled airline

movements, which have yet to recover fully from the pandemic slowdown. "That's bound to be a driver for business aviation," Koe said. Worldwide airline movements during the period discussed are down 22 percent, while MENA airline movements dropped 10 percent. "When scheduled airlines are down, business jets are up," he noted. "This is evidence that people are using business aviation."

Some of the drivers of increased business jet activity in the MENA region aren't just business needs but events like the FIFA World Cup and humanitarian operations in Iraq.

Another surprising number is that business jet movements from Al Maktoum International Airport to MENA airports are up 200 percent since late 2019. Another high-traffic destination affecting that number is Moscow.

Despite factors such as economic concerns and the dissipation of the Covid effect, WingX anticipates a compound annual growth rate of 15 to 20 percent for business aircraft flying in the MENA region for the next five years. **M.T.**



WingX managing director Richard Koe outlined changes in business aviation traffic from November 2019 through November 2022 during MEBA 2022.



Titan Aviation to grow fleet and expand in U.S.

by Peter Shaw-Smith

Dubai-based Titan Aviation (Static Display) manages and operates a fleet of more than 30 aircraft and is planning to bring that size to 50 aircraft by the end of next year, managing director Sakeer Sheik told AIN.

The plan he outlined at EBACE of adding 10 aircraft in 2022 and then hitting 50 at the end of 2023 is progressing. “The addition of six aircraft since EBACE is a positive step,” he said. “I didn’t travel around much because I became busy in the U.S. If I had, we probably would’ve hit 10. Even so, we managed to add six airplanes. That’s a very positive step.”

Titan stepped up involvement in the U.S. market “quite aggressively” in the first half of 2022. “We have hired a full-time CEO, president, and general manager to turn the U.S. business around,” he said. “We have now got some traction in the U.S. market. We’re doing aircraft management, as well as charter sales. We have broadened the number of qualified people in the firm. That’s an expansion that we wanted to do at the time of EBACE.”

Sheik is keen to grow the fleet. “I believe we are on track: we have signed up six aircraft under management since June,” he said. “That’s also very progressive and something that we also wanted to do in the rest of the world. It’s a charter management model—a hybrid model. Some of the six are completely under our management, while two are under charter management, which means we sell the charters to the market. We’ve added aircraft to the fleet and we continue to do that.”

Expected 2022 flight hours could reach a target of around 7,000 hours. “The hours have consistently grown,” he said. “This is not just Titan; it’s the entire industry.”

He expects 2023 to be another excellent year, with more vacationers and wealthy families flying private for both leisure and corporate use. “The charter numbers have gone up,” he said. “Utilization has gone up. I believe that we are seeing an upswing since 2021; it’s been consistent and that’s the key here. Although people are talking about a recession in the U.S., you do have a slowdown.

“One area of concern is real estate; the market has slowed down in the U.S. Big companies

are laying people off, but the private, business, and corporate aviation side is holding steady. Nothing has changed,” Sheik added. “At least that’s the U.S. indicator; no other region has been impacted as badly as the U.S. when it comes to inflation or loss of jobs. It’s been very positive, what’s been happening around us.”

As experienced by several competitors, Sheik sees more new market entrants moving from charter to ownership. “That’s very positive for companies like ours because it also feeds our management division,” he said. “Charter users moving to aircraft ownership is good for us, and that’s one of the strategies we are trying to develop because then we end up managing those airplanes for the new owners.”

The pandemic has played an important role, according to Sheik. “Corporates, businessmen, and families wanted to travel in a safer environment, not just for themselves but their colleagues and families,” he said, “They started flying private when they saw the efficiency and benefits.

“Once Covid was brought under control, they continued to fly private because it gave them flexibility they had not envisioned before. All of a sudden they found that money can be better utilized to save time. That’s what private aviation is all about.”

Titan continues to operate five air operator certificates (AOC) or equivalent: an FAA Part 135, San Marino, India, Indonesia, and a private Cayman license. It has now been a San

Marino AOC holder and operator for five years.

“We have established ourselves very well in terms of understanding and implementation of the regulations,” he said. “We have grown our quality department to ensure that there are no slip-ups from our side. It’s a situation where we have established ourselves and it’s a very mature relationship because we know what the authority wants and always follow those guidelines. When we talk about flexibility, it’s about getting things done on time. They’re extremely cooperative and efficient in those aspects.”

Earlier this year, Titan added a Boeing BBJ to its fleet and is now on the lookout for more aircraft in the super midsize or large-cabin category. “We are in talks for another BBJ and an Airbus ACJ,” he said. “We are planning to add those. We always had the strength and now we also have the experience. We are looking at adding other widebody, long-range airplanes.”

Titan executed four aircraft sales transactions destined for its management and charter in India in the last five-six months. Better slot coordination at metro airports, ease of extending watch hours for airports with limited opening hours, and the installation of nav aids to ensure safer operations were among the improvements Sheik identified.

“The requirement for, and the usage of, aircraft in India has gone up considerably,” he said. “Infrastructure has improved as the regulations have been very proactively modified, keeping the interest of everybody. That’s a very positive step.”

Titan faced a dilemma on the eve of the MEBA Show as to which aircraft to put on static display since all were busy, Sheik said. “Titan Aviation’s global team is attending. We have a very big presence at MEBA this time.

Titan’s venture into the U.S. market has set it apart from Indian peers. “I don’t think there is any other Indian company that has ventured into the U.S. market yet, but it’s a big market,” he said. “It’s got scope for many other players. There are already many existing players, local players, in the U.S., but then there are always opportunities. I was asked the same question when I moved to the U.S. in 2018: what was Titan going to do differently in the U.S., which was already a saturated market?”

“We have established a services business around the world, and we continue to do the same business in the U.S. as well,” he said. “You continue to grow, add airplanes and bring more people into the company. In this market, there’s opportunity for everybody.” ■

ExecuJet OMDW MRO facility to open in 1Q23

by Peter Shaw-Smith

ExecuJet MRO Services, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Dassault Aviation (Static A21), is to open its new facility at Al Maktoum International Airport (OMDW) in the first quarter of next year, according to Nick Weber, the company’s regional v-p for the Middle East. The new facility will be able to simultaneously house 18 to 24 business jets and has been sized to handle the very largest, including the forthcoming Falcon 6X and 10X, as well as large jets from other OEMs, ExecuJet said.

ExecuJet’s Dubai MRO service is currently based at Dubai International Airport (OMDB) but will relocate early next year to the OMDW facility. It has also been operating a temporary FBO at OMDW for a number of years, which will also be transferred to the new site.

“We have been preparing for entry into service of the Falcon 6X, with tools and spare parts already identified and on their way,” said Weber. “Arrangements have been made to initially send four engineers to Dassault Aviation for Falcon 6X maintenance training

in advance of the aircraft’s expected entry into service in mid-2023. Our MRO facility will be an important center outside of Europe and North America for support of the Falcon 6X and 10X.”

He added that it would have the capability to do “line through heavier base maintenance checks” on the long-range, large-cabin Dassault Falcon business jets.

The 15,000-sq-m (163,000-sq-ft) MRO facility includes a hangar, as well as adjacent workshops and offices. The facility will also become ExecuJet’s new regional headquarters in Dubai while the company will still retain AOG capability at OMDB, it said.

ExecuJet MRO Services is a factory service center for all in-production Dassault Falcons. It also provides line and base maintenance for Bombardier, Embraer Executive Jets, and nearly all types of Hawker business jets.

ExecuJet MRO operates facilities in Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, and the Middle East. “Specializing in airframe, avionics, and engine maintenance, our technical experts are trained and certified on a wide range of aircraft,” the company said. ■



ExecuJet’s new MRO facility at Al Maktoum International Airport is designed to accommodate the largest business jets, including Dassault’s upcoming 6X and 10X, as well as jets from other manufacturers.

Action Aviation maintains momentum in big jet sales

by Peter Shaw-Smith

Having had its best-ever year in 2021, Dubai-based Action Aviation has seen more brisk activity in 2022. After selling 30 new and preowned business aircraft last year, it expects to handle a total of around 25 transactions by the end of this month, according to company chairman Hamish Harding.

“We do the big jets,” he told *AIN*. “It’s easy to do lots of little mandates on light jets here or there. We don’t tend to do that. Most of our deals are on the bigger jets: higher value, more complicated

as inventory improves. “It’s still just as good as last year, which was our best year ever,” he said. “This year is looking equally good at the moment. There’s better availability of aircraft now. Earlier in the year, we had plenty of demand and there was nothing out there, really. Now there are aircraft available. They are still highly priced, so that’s one of the challenges: finding sensibly priced aircraft. But if you can, then they’ll always sell.”

Preowned inventory vanishing to zero has been a feature of the market in the past 12 months, but

causing difficulties in the brokerage market. “The number-one problem we’re facing right now is that you just can’t get pre-purchase inspection slots on a sensible timescale. You can’t get the slot times in the facilities. That is a massive problem with doing deals at the moment—at the end of 2022. It’s a global problem. People were getting the last slot of the year in October. People want to buy the aircraft. They won’t get an inspection this year, in many cases, which is a big issue. This year, people may have to buy without an inspection.”

in or into Columbia.”

Harding also believes the market is calling for a dramatic increase in new metal. “There’s this backlog on new orders,” he said. “As we all know, it’s harder to ramp up production lines than it looks. Supply chains are so difficult these days and spare parts are an issue. We’ve come across lead times on things such as leading edges of six months. You typically can’t get a leading edge for some popular business jet types, for example.”

He notices a strong push from first-time buyers coming into the market in Asia and the Middle East.

“People are waking up to it,” he said. “Charter is difficult to do. I think that’s the main thing. Charter people are awfully busy and charter prices are much more expensive than a couple of years ago. And also, while a particular aircraft may have a published hourly block price of \$10,000 an hour and a particular flight might be eight hours round trip, the end price is already substantially more than the obvious \$80,000, making real hourly prices a lot higher than people say.”

That is driving people to buy their own jet. “I just met somebody the other night and he’s so fed up with paying \$50,000 or more for a round trip from India to Dubai. He asks why. It’s a ridiculous price for a trip in a small jet. He’s now going to look into getting a small jet himself.”

After the slowdown of events during the pandemic, from which Dubai has stormed back this year, the MEBA show this week is a welcome prospect. Harding said his firm has attended most major business aviation shows throughout its existence. “We’ll be there as we always are,” he said. “Life is busy and good. There are just so many things going on. The aviation market is so busy at the moment. That’s the challenge: to stay on top of everything.” ■



“This year is looking equally good at the moment. There’s better availability of aircraft now.”

Action Aviation chairman Hamish Harding

deals. This year, we will do 25 often fairly complicated, quite large-value deals, sometimes with trade-in aircraft or Action Aviation financing of clients.”

Its business is reliant on relationships Harding has built over almost two decades. “Partners tend to bring us many of the off-market preowned jets, as we have worked with some of them for up to 18 years and usually have a good collection of most types of jets that we can source when clients need them,” he said. “This sort of gets around the apparent shortages of inventory that are usually found.”

Earlier in the year, preowned and new-production aircraft alike were difficult to locate, but he sees the problem easing off

he said the situation is improving. “I think that’s where it was a few months ago,” he said. “Right now, the market has inventory to offer. For example, there are about 25 Gulfstream G550s available for sale on the market today, although many are at unrealistic prices, so not all are really in play to sell.”

He believes a number of Chinese aircraft are available that are set to enter the market. “Obviously, Russian aircraft are grounded, whether sanctioned or non-sanctioned,” he said. “I think there are people who see a higher price now for their aircraft than they paid for it and they’ll take the prices. It’s pretty positive for brokerage and brokers at the moment.”

However, another issue is

Action Aviation currently owns four jets: a Boeing BBJ, Bombardier Global XRS, Dassault Falcon 900EX EASy, and Embraer Legacy 600, which it manages itself, along with some other customer aircraft. All line maintenance is done at Jet Aviation in Dubai.

Harding sees growth in the region’s business aviation sector. “There are a lot of high-net-worth visitors who come into Dubai long term who aren’t long-term Emiratis but are living here and buying aircraft in Dubai,” he said. “We’re a worldwide business, so preowned aircraft sales are a worldwide phenomenon. It doesn’t make a lot of difference whether you sell the aircraft into a local market you happen to live

JAMES HOLAHAN (1921-2015), FOUNDING EDITOR
WILSON S. LEACH, FOUNDER & CEO

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF – Matt Thurber

PRESS ROOM EDITOR – Chad Trautvetter

THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Charles Alcock	Kerry Lynch	Peter Shaw-Smith
Curt Epstein	Gregory Polek	James Wynbrandt
Eugene Gergen	Kate Sarsfield	Hanneke Weitering
Mark Huber	Jerry Siebenmark	

PRODUCTION MANAGER – Martha Jercinovich

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS – Alena Korenkov, John A. Manfredi,
Grzegorz Rzekos

PHOTOGRAPHER – David McIntosh

DIRECTOR OF VIDEO – Ian Whelan

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER – Dave Leach

VICE PRESIDENT SALES & MARKETING – Karl H. Elken

SENIOR DIRECTOR, INDUSTRY AFFAIRS AND EVENTS
– Nancy O'Brien

ADVERTISING SALES

Michelle James – Midwestern U.S., Western U.S./Western
Canada/Asia Pacific, +1 (520) 343-0236Joe Rosone – Mid-Atlantic U.S./Southeast U.S./Caribbean/
Brazil, +1 (301) 693-4687

Diana Scogna – Europe/Middle East, +33 6 62 52 25 47

Victoria Tod – Northeastern U.S./Eastern Canada/Great Lakes
U.S./United Kingdom, +1 (203) 733-4184

Yury Laskin – Russia, +7 05 912 1346

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR – Eileen Silberfeld

MARKETING AND CLIENT SERVICES MANAGER – Lisa Valladares

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING – Zach O'Brien

SALES ADMINISTRATOR – Cindy Nesline

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & HUMAN RESOURCES – Michele Hubert

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE – Mary Avella

ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE – Bobbie Bing

U.S. HEADQUARTERS:

214 Franklin Ave., Midland Park, NJ 07432, +1 (201) 444-5075

Advertising Inquiries: +1 (201) 345-0085, adsales@ainonline.com

Circulation Inquiries: +1 (201) 345-0085

subscriptions@ainonline.com

WASHINGTON, D.C. EDITORIAL OFFICE:

Kerry Lynch (business aviation) – klynch@ainonline.com

+1 (703) 969-9195

EUROPEAN EDITORIAL OFFICE:

Charles Alcock – calcock@ainonline.com, Tel: +44 7799 907595

MEBAA Convention News is a publication of the AIN Media Group, Inc., 214 Franklin Ave., Midland Park, NJ 07432; Tel: +1 (201) 444-5075. Copyright © 2021 All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission of AIN Media Group, Inc. is strictly prohibited. AIN Media Group, Inc. publishes **Aviation International News**, **AINAlerts**, **AIN Air Transport Perspective**, **Business Jet Traveler**, **BJTwaypoints**, **ABACE Convention News**, **Dubai Airshow News**, **EBACE Convention News**, **Farnborough Airshow News**, **FutureFlight.aero**, **HAI Convention News**, **LABACE Convention News**, **NBAA Convention News**, **Paris Airshow News**, **Singapore Airshow News**, **Mobile Apps: Aviation International News; AINonline**. PUBLICATION MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40649046 RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO: PITNEY BOWES INTERNATIONAL MAIL, STATION A, P.O. BOX 54, WINDSOR, ON, N9A 6J5, returns il@imex.pb.com.

THE CONVENTION NEWS COMPANY, INC.
AIN PUBLICATIONS EXECUTIVE TEAM

Wilson Leach	Jennifer Leach English	Karl H. Elken
Matt Thurber	Dave Leach	
Michele Hubert	Nancy O'Brien	

Printed by Emirates Printing Press L.L.C., Dubai

Skyplan opening regional dispatcher training facility

by Peter Shaw-Smith

UAE-based flight planning and dispatch concern Skyplan Services is opening a new flight dispatchers' training school in Dubai this month. "We are launching Skyline Innovation Academy at Dubai Airport Free Zone [DAFZA]," Muhammad Sami, president and CEO of Skyplan Services, told AIN. "We just received our flight dispatch training organization approval from the General Authority for Civil Aviation [GCAA]."

Costs for its three-day recurrent flight dispatcher course include tuition and competency checks, with the inaugural course to start on December 12. The long-term goal of the establishment is twofold: train new entrants for a flight dispatch career and also maintain the skills of existing professionals, who are required to undergo retesting every 12 months and renew their license every two years.

"It means that we can do the flight dispatch initial courses, both study and on-job training, which is mandated by the GCAA to obtain the flight dispatch license," he said. "Also, we can do the recurrent flight dispatch courses."

Skyplan was established in 1983 and is headquartered in Canada. Its core business is flight planning and contract flight dispatch. Dubai is its regional headquarters in the Middle East region. In the Middle East, flight dispatch training is today largely organized through the airlines, and the entrance of private-sector players will shake up the market and provide additional bandwidth for training.

"Since 1983, we have been involved with flight planning systems and providing contract dispatch services to the airlines and business jet community," Sami said. "We saw the need in the market for well-trained flight dispatchers. We saw the gap and we thought we should start the aviation academy with our own brand name and start doing the training."

In Canada, Skyplan has a complete operations control center and provides contract dispatch and trip support services to airlines and corporate operators, as well as the general aviation market.

Flight dispatch is a key element of trip support, which Sami defines as everything required to operate a flight from one airport to another. "Besides the flight plan, you require fuel, ground handling, permits, and a hotel for your crew," he said. "It's the assistance you require to operate the flight at any airport. It takes a lot of background work."



DAVID MCINTOSH

Muhammad Sami, president and CEO of SkyPlan Services, is overseeing the opening of SkyPlan's Skyline Innovation Academy in Dubai.

The company believes that its courses will be attractive to industry participants as far afield as the Commonwealth of Independent States, Africa, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan. Sami said Skyplan Services is also investigating the establishment of a sister academy in East Africa, possibly in Kenya. In the meantime, it will be busy servicing the local market.

"DAFZA is a very central location and it is still considered as Dubai's aviation hub," Sami said. "Our audience, flight dispatchers, are mostly based in that area." ■

VistaJet's Middle East market keeps growing

by Peter Shaw-Smith

VistaJet's total membership hours sold in the Middle East were up 60 percent year-over-year in the first half of 2022, well ahead of a 43 percent increase in this metric globally over the same period, VistaJet chief commercial officer Ian Moore said in the run-up to the MEBA Show this week.

"The one thing that's been really driven in the last five years, in particular, is that the Middle East customer base is now far more accepting of a shared model because of the efficiencies it brings, and because they're expanding their businesses, not just in the Middle East, but in other locations around the world," Moore told *AIN*.

"They're looking for a global proposition, and for a consistent service at the highest level. We feel very comfortable and very bullish actually about the region. In general, the Middle East is well placed with what's going on in the world today, and we're seeing continued strength in our business model in that region," he said.

"During the first six months of 2022, Vista added more than 100 aircraft to the fleet, both through the two acquisitions and scheduled

fleet deliveries," a company spokesperson said. "Today, Vista clients have access to a members' fleet of over 360 aircraft."

Worldwide, Moore said aircraft ownership was more prevalent in the 2000s or 2010s and has now become less of a demand, even in the Middle East—a region long associated with the need to possess the asset. "I would say the trend has been more that the Middle East has accepted the efficiencies from a cost, but also from a service and an availability, perspective," he said.

He added that VistaJet's (Stand 1050) regional performance is important because its business is a subscription-based model that lasts for multiple years. "It's not one-off flights," he said. "People are committing to us for multiyear periods. We feel that [growth in the Middle East] is a great indicator, again, not just for the industry, but I think very much for our business and our business model, and how it's resonating in the region. It's probably the best number I can give you."



Ian Moore, VistaJet chief commercial officer

Moore denied that Middle East customers are more discerning or difficult to please than those from other parts of the world. "I think the kind of clientele that we have and the people who can afford to fly with our products are very demanding because that's what they can have with their wealth status and need for our product.

"More importantly, I think in the past, a lot of people thought the Middle East customer wanted to own their aircraft. Our business model certainly means you have to be in a shared concept and look at cost efficiencies rather than having a trophy asset."

Many of VistaJet's clients are in multiple businesses and industries. "I'm talking about financial investment, not the finance industry; about direct investment into different industries," he said.

"Businesses in the Middle East in particular are very much expanding their horizons outside of their countries and regions, and they're doing that through investments," Moore continued.

"I wouldn't think there's much difference between one region to the next. Maybe technology is a little bit swayed toward the U.S. There's also a tech hub opening up in the Middle East as well, so it's difficult to generalize."

Moore said most of Vista's Middle East business is local. "The majority of our Middle Eastern contracts are from the local community, not from international businesses based there." ■

Ecommpay brings payment management platform to Middle East

Ecommpay (Stand 376) is expanding its reach into the Middle East market with its all-in-one payment offering for business aviation. Providing an overview of the management platform at its MEBA 2022 exhibit, Ecommpay has developed a service for business aviation, medical aviation, and helicopter transport that combines, card, bank, and crypto payments, the company said, explaining its goal has been to provide an alternate payment capability that isn't reliant on bank hours or the pace of wire transfer.

Under the Ecommpay management platform, businesses can create invoices and accept real-time payments 24/7/365. This enables business aviation operators to accept last-minute bookings and reduce their transaction fees. In addition, users can manage payment status through a single dashboard, eliminating the use of multiple interfaces to manage booking, payment, and payout processes.

Built in-house, the payment offering combines payments, Apple Pay, and Google Pay. Remittances and e-invoice payments are paid through a secure, personalized payment link. The platform additionally enables operators to accept crypto payments with conversions straight to the U.S. dollar, euro, or British pound.

Ecommpay counts among its clients European service providers Quantum Via, LLJets, Aim of Emperor, Mirai Flights, Elbjets, Amber Jet, and Main Passenger Club.

"The new solution provides a more efficient and streamlined process for private aviation companies and brokers to manage their payments and payouts," said Ecommpay business development manager Simona Moosar. "Addressing all the pain points in the industry, the all-in-one interface helps aviation companies take their business to new heights." **K.L.**

54th

INTERNATIONAL PARIS AIR SHOW

Paris • Le Bourget

19 > 25 JUNE 2023

PARIS AIR SHOW is
boarding now

Don't be left in
transit!

BOOK YOUR STAND



SCAN ME

YOU CHOSE FALCON FOR A REASON. OUR NETWORK EXPANSION ADDS EVEN MORE.



ExecuJet expands at Dubai DWC Airport

Dassault is going farther to offer Falcon support closer to our customers. An expanded, ExecuJet MRO Services facility in Dubai will add significant capacity to our already extensive worldwide network. It's another reason to fly Falcon.

Dassault MRO Group

WWW.DASSAULTFALCON.COM | FRANCE: +33 1 47 11 88 68 | DUBAI: +971 4 299 3950

