

Executive & VIP Aviation International

October 2011

**Powering the dream
at Hawker Beechcraft**

**A broad spectrum at
Bizjet International**

**Managing commodities:
CRS Jet Spares**

**Comlux brings in
the heavy metal**

**Saudia Private Aviation:
a complete
solution**
says CEO, Wajdi Abdullah Al Idrissi

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Darrell Frey



James Kelley



Jeff Kilgore

Gulfstream promotes 3 directors

In an ongoing effort to better serve operators, Gulfstream Aerospace Corp recently promoted three veteran employees to help manage its growing Savannah service centre. Darrell Frey, James Kelley and Jeff Kilgore were each named Director, Savannah Service Center Operations. All three men report to Charles Celli, Vice President, Gulfstream Savannah Service Center Operations.

Frey, Kelley and Kilgore oversee and direct operations at the Gulfstream Savannah Service Center, which comprises the 679,000ft² main facility and the 175,000ft² satellite site, Gulfstream Savannah Service Center South. Each Director will be responsible for a specific series of Gulfstream aircraft models. An estimated 1,400 to 1,500 aircraft are expected to visit the Savannah facility in 2011 for maintenance.

"We will transition to a model-based structure in the Savannah service center over the next four to six months," Celli says. "By focusing on a specific aircraft, these Directors and their teams will be able to leverage their extensive technical knowledge and hands-on experience to the further benefit of our operators."

Gama Aviation bolsters team

Gama Aviation, the international business aviation services company, has strengthened its senior management with four promotions in its flight operations team. Captain Steve Wright has been promoted to Chief Operating Officer and Accountable Manager. Captain Steve Woodfine has been promoted to Chief Pilot. Ian Cheese has been appointed Director of Flight Operations; and Captain Brian Cozens is newly appointed Head of Training, responsible for all of Gama's crew training worldwide.

ARINC Direct adds aircraft

In the past three months since EBACE in Geneva, ARINC Direct has added 50 more aircraft to the international fleet it supports. "There continues to be a strong take up in SwiftBroadband, which is gathering more interest with the extension of the product suite and the capability of new hardware solutions on more aircraft to support this service. The EMEA and Asia Pacific customer base has grown substantially, mirroring increased new aircraft deliveries in these

territories," says ARINC Direct Senior Business Manager, James Hardie.

Hrna promoted at ABS Jets

ABS Jets, the Prague-based aircraft operator and services provider, has announced that Jiri Hrna has been promoted to the position of Senior Key Account Manager. The appointment was effective from September 1, 2011. Previously Hrna was Sales Manager with ABS Jets.

Raisbeck hosts Chinese

Officials of the Chinese Civil Aviation Authority (CAAC) have visited Raisbeck Engineering's Seattle headquarters to complete certification requirements for Raisbeck Performance Systems in China. The first two Raisbeck systems to go through the process are dual aft body strakes and nacelle wing lockers for the King Air 350. Sales of these systems into China are imminent according to Bill Lally, Raisbeck's FAA Coordinator.

Concierge cleared for take off

London based Concierge Aviation Limited has been awarded its UK CAA Air Operating Certifi-

cate with a Lear 40XR Executive Jet now available for charter. "We are now into our next stage of development," says Managing Director Glen Smith. "This achievement is a key step towards our long-term future, as we can now offer commercial charter services on our growing fleet of managed aircraft. The strategy is to enhance our service standard and to ensure our clients experience the highest levels of professionalism."

EAS adds Burls

Executive Air Services (EAS), a worldwide aircraft charter and management company, has announced that Jonathan Burls has joined the company's Opa-Locka airport office as Director of Maintenance. Burls is the founder of Reliable Jet Maintenance, a full FAR 145 repair station located in Boca Raton, Florida. He has more than 28 years of experience in both FAR 135 and 145 operations. Prior to founding Reliable Jet Maintenance, he served as Vice President and Director of Maintenance for a 135 operation, maintaining a fleet of 17 aircraft.

Hawker appoints "KJ" CFO

Hawker Beechcraft Corporation (HBC) has announced the appointment of Karin-Joyce "KJ" Tjon as its new Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Tjon joins the company's Senior Leadership Team and will be responsible for the management and direction of the company's finance and accounting organisation.



Karin-Joyce "KJ" Tjon



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Embraer signs with Metrojet

Embraer has signed an Authorised Service Center Agreement with Metrojet Ltd. It is expected that Metrojet will be fully equipped to provide line and base maintenance for Embraer's Legacy 600, Legacy 650 and Lineage 1000 customers by November 2011. Hong Kong-based Metrojet is a leading business aviation service provider in Asia, and offers a full range of services, including aircraft maintenance, fleet management, and charter services, among others. The company is a Hong Kong CAD and CCAR 145 approved maintenance organisation, and is certified by other authorities as well, including the US FAA, Macau CAA, Canada TCCA, Bermuda BDCA and Cayman CAA.

Innotech appoints Moon

Innotech-Execaire Aviation Group, a division of I.M.P. Group International, has appointed Ken Moon Regional Manager, Aircraft Sales Division for western Canada, including new Cessna Citation sales, and brokerage of pre-owned aircraft worldwide. Moon brings to Innotech an extensive background in corporate aviation with over 32 years' experience in aircraft logistics and management. He has worked with several business aircraft companies, both as an employee and owner. He joins Innotech with a deep knowledge of business aircraft operations and technical support, particularly in the west.

market, and those who require certification from CAAC, as well," says Ernest Edwards, President, Embraer Executive Jets.

Gulfstream appoints Zimmerman

Gulfstream Aerospace Corp has named Derek Zimmerman to the newly created position of Vice President, Product Support Materials. In this post, Zimmerman oversees the material supply chain, parts sales and worldwide parts distribution for Gulfstream's Product Support organisation. He reports to Mark Burns, President, Gulfstream Product Support.



Derek Zimmerman

CAAC approves Lineage 1000

Embraer's ultra-large Lineage 1000 executive jet has received Type Certificate from the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), following the certifications from the US FAA, EASA and Brazil's ANAC. This paves the way to register and operate the Lineage 1000 in China, and marks an important step symbolising Embraer's commitment to the Chinese executive aviation market.

"It is exceptionally exciting news that the Lineage 1000 has received validation from CAAC, which is a strong recognition of our product. Embraer is now able to better serve customers of the Lineage 1000 in the Chinese

Jet Aviation: A330-200

Jet Aviation Basel has been awarded a new refurbishment contract for an A330-200 by an undisclosed client. To reduce the required downtime of the aircraft and to ensure timely completion and redelivery, Jet Aviation will prepare all required parts in advance of the Airbus's arrival at the facility, scheduled for the end of 2011.

"Customers at Jet Aviation Basel appreciate working with our engineering and pre-production teams during the upfront phase and greatly value our ability to customise aircraft to their exact specifications," says Stephan Krenz, Senior Vice President and General Manager of Jet Aviation Basel.

Hawker appoints ExecuJet

Hawker Beechcraft (HBC) Global Customer Support (GCS) has announced the expansion of its relationship with ExecuJet in Lanseria, South Africa, by appointing it as an Authorised Service Center (ASC) for its Beechcraft King Air products. In 2010, HBC appointed ExecuJet Lanseria, as well as other ExecuJet locations, as an ASC for its Hawker product line.

"As our King Air customer base continues to grow internationally, it is important that we provide our owners with the utmost quality and convenience when it comes to servicing their aircraft," says Christi Tannahill, HBC Vice President, GCS. "ExecuJet continues to be a knowledgeable and reliable resource that provides our Hawker customers with service of the highest quality, and we are proud to now extend this resource to our King Air customers."

API winglets on Falcon 900

Aviation Partners, Inc (API) has announced that the FAA has granted Supplemental Type Certificate approval for its High Mach Blended Winglets on the Falcon 900 Series. European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) approval is expected to follow shortly. Certification of the Winglets represents the culmination of a two-year development programme and exhaustive flight testing, and comes on the heels of a similar certification for Falcon 2000 series aircraft in April 2009.

LEA offers Legacy fleet

With the addition of a new Legacy 650, London Executive Aviation (LEA), one of Europe's

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largest business jet charter operators, is now flying the world's largest non-fractional Embraer Legacy fleet. LEA operates two Legacy 650s and six Legacy 600s in a total charter fleet of 24 aircraft, ranging from the entry-level Cessna Citation Mustang to the transatlantic Dassault Falcon 900EX. Both the Legacy 650 and 600 can seat 13 passengers, with the 650 being the extended range derivative.

LEA Managing Director George Galanopoulos says: "Like the Falcon 900EX, the Legacy 650 brings us truly transatlantic capability." The Legacy 650 has a maximum range of 3,800 miles with four passengers. "We can offer nonstop routes like London-New York, London-Lagos, Dubai-London and Astana-London, to name just a few. And we've already taken one of our 650s to the Seychelles with just one stop and carried out a London-Los Angeles trip with only a quick fuelling stop in Canada. We can provide all these services for around 30% less than the equivalent flights in a Gulfstream or a Bombardier Global, yet the cabins are almost identical."

CJ4: Brazilian certification

Cessna Aircraft Company now has type certification for the Citation CJ4 from the Agência Nacional de Aviação Civil and expects to make first deliveries of the newest and largest member of the popular CJ family of business jets in Brazil by year's end. The CJ4 gained US FAA certification in March 2010, followed quickly by first deliveries, and also gained certification from

the European Aviation Safety Agency as well as Isle of Man this year. The company is working to obtain certification in Canada and South Africa by the end of the year.

Cessna delivered 19 Citation CJ4 aircraft in 2010 and 16 through the first half of this year. The aircraft is approved for single-pilot operations and shares a common pilot type rating with the other CJs.

Gulfstream appoints Fields

Gulfstream Aerospace Corp has named company veteran Jamie Fields to the newly created position of Director, Repair and Overhaul Services. Fields reports to Barry Russell, Vice President, Customer Support. In his new role, Fields is responsible for expanding and enhancing Gulfstream's repair and overhaul capabilities worldwide, particularly for components.

Al Bateen to host exhibition

Abu Dhabi Airports Company (ADAC) has announced the launch of Abu Dhabi Air Expo. The exhibition will be hosted at Al Bateen Executive Airport, the region's only dedicated private jet airport, during March 2012. Abu Dhabi Air Expo will be brought to the UAE by ADAC in cooperation with Adone, the organisers and host of the Cannes Airshow held annually in Cannes, France, over the last five years.

Buchholz for Hongkong Jet

Hongkong Jet has announced the appointment of Chris Buchholz as Chief Executive Officer and

Mark Thibault as Chief Operating Officer, two well known heavyweights of business aviation in the Asia Pacific Region. Buchholz says: "I'm delighted to have joined Hongkong Jet at this very exciting time and to lead a 'dream team' of highly regarded business aviation professionals with the goal of being the best international business jet operator in the region and beyond with an uncompromising focus on safety and impeccable service."



Belfast City chooses Avfuel

George Best Belfast City Airport and Eurojet Aviation, the locally based FBO, have announced that they will partner with US-based Avfuel Corporation for fuel and services. As the business aviation supplier, Avfuel will provide fuel, fuel purchasing solutions, credit processing equipment, marketing support, a loyalty program for pilots and much more to support Eurojet's business aviation customers.

Air Partner launches app
 Air Partner has unveiled the first multi-lingual real-time iPhone app for private jet availability globally. The app is free to download and is available in seven key languages – English, French, Russian, German, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese. The language displayed is determined by the settings on a user's iPhone. A choice of 36 currencies is available in the cost calculator option.





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Saudia Private Aviation - standing at the forefront



Saudia Private Aviation (SPA) is a strategic business unit of Saudi Arabia Airlines. It has a fleet which offers both ultra long range and regional capability and has also partnered up - namely with Comlux - to provide a complete solution to business aviation needs in the region and beyond. Based in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and with FBOs planned in Jeddah, Riyadh, Dammam and Madina, SPA is perfectly placed to stand at the forefront of business aviation in the Middle East region. Executive & VIP Aviation International (EVA) speaks to Wajdi Abdullah Al Idrissi (WAAI), Managing Director of SPA



Wajdi Abdullah Al Idrissi

EVA: What does the owned fleet currently comprise and what is on order? How is this owned fleet set to change over the coming decade in terms of aircraft types and the number of units?

WAAI: The current fleet consist of our Hawker 400XPs and our Falcon 7Xs. We have six Hawker 400XPs and three Falcon 7Xs. Also, we've placed one more Falcon 7X aircraft on order and we shall receive it during this year. Currently, we're adapting to the increasing demand for private aviation, thus we are requesting more aircraft as more individuals, companies and other interested organisations need them.

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“Adding the Falcon 7X to the fleet was about meeting the demands of our valued clients” (Al Idrissi)

EVA: And aircraft management? What is your ambition for managing aircraft and do you already manage third-party business jets?

WAAI: Currently SPA provides services for 28 aircraft, our ambition regarding aircraft management is to give more efficient and reliable services to our customers and meet their needs. Our services will include catering, maintenance, operation and ground services as well.

EVA: What is driving your requirement to expand your business jet fleet? Is it caused by demand from your home base or from the region generally? Will you expand into airliner sized aircraft too?

WAAI: Our main demand is based on our home-base business requirement, as more than 75% of private aviation is located within KSA and the other demand comes from the GCC countries in addition to the international market, through our reliable business associates, brokers and direct contacts. Because of our long experience, we will expand into airliner sized aircraft. Currently SPA uses the Saudi Airlines fleet to cover the demand. We are planning to have airliner sized aircraft with VIP generation.

EVA: What is the basis for your agreement with Comlux Middle East? Does it enable SPA to grow faster, both in the Middle East and in Europe? Presumably it opens new avenues for Comlux too?

WAAI: Our agreement with Comlux Middle East helps us to expand our coverage and to satisfy our customers' needs regarding ACJ requirements. This type of agreement will enable SPA to have reliable partners, to expand our network through strategic alliances regionally and internationally.

EVA: Will the FBO at Jeddah be the only facility you build or are there opportunities for other FBOs/service centres in the Kingdom – or within your region? Are you looking further afield too?

WAAI: The SPA FBO at Jeddah King Abdulaziz International Airport will be opened early next year which will enable SPA to give better services to our dedicated clients in terms of aircraft management, ground services and technical services, etc. Also, our aim is to have an FBO at our main airports such as Riyadh, Dammam and Madina. We are coordinating with GACA to meet our future plans.

EVA: What has been the feedback in relation to your existing fleet of Falcon 7X aircraft? Has it met all expectations?

WAAI: We've been getting positive feedback. After all, adding the Falcon 7X to the fleet was about meeting the demands of our valued clients. Yes, indeed, the Falcon 7X has met our expectations.

EVA: What about the Hawker 400XPs? What

is their mission within your fleet?

WAAI: Our fleet of Hawker 400XPs cover most of the short haul flights domestically and regionally such as (DXB, CAI, BEY, DOH, KWI, AUH... etc.) with a very suitable price for businessmen and families and a total of six passengers per flight.

EVA: Are you investigating any other aircraft types and do you think your fleet will be more diverse in the future?

WAAI: Yes, we are looking at medium sized executive jets with 10-14 passengers for the range KSA to London non-stop. This will enable SPA to compete more efficiently. Also, the flexibility for modifying the fleet will always be there in order to compete in the market.

EVA: To what extent does SPA work with the airline to deliver services to passengers that dovetail with each other? Or is SPA a totally stand-alone business?



WAAI: SPA is a daughter company of Saudi Arabian Airlines and we work independently as a private aviation provider with a dedicated team to offer special services to meet customers' expectations.

EVA: Do you have a master plan which delivers a snapshot of the size and scope of SPA by a set date in the future?

WAAI: Our plan for SPA is to have 20 privately owned aircraft by the year 2020 plus a minimum of 20 aircraft under full management. We are optimistic that we will exceed these expectations due to our existing market growth and the high demands for private aviation. ●



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Powering the dream

Hawker Beechcraft is bullish about its prospects for aftermarket sales and support. Phil Nasskau speaks to Vice President for Aftermarket Sales and Support Brian Howell

We are doing very well in what is typically, from an expert's perspective, a 3-4% industry. We had 16% year-on-year growth last year. We've made some very strategic investments, picking specific aircraft to go after. We do of course have some 37,000 Hawker Beechcraft aircraft to play with..." says Howell. He says that there has been a "lot of investment into key programmes". "We looked at what the customer wanted, and there are three major things they want: lower operating costs, increased resale value and changing the mission profile."

"We've spent the last 18-24 months working on a combination of those three factors. We have the ability to increase performance on a used aircraft. The re-engining of the Hawker 800XP gave not only a range boost, but also a 30% reduction in fuel burn and increased the resale value by about \$3 million," he says.

At present, in addition to the 800 series' engine mod, there are major modifications available for the Hawker 400 and the King Air 200. And, while Howell won't say which aircraft among the stable is next for an upgrade, he explains: "Expect to see us with a strategy around re-engining and some aerodynamic mods, such as winglets. There are a few other models that we definitely have our eye on and expect to make a significant announcement at this year's NBAA."

Howell believes his company is performing "very competitively" against the competition. He says: "We started 2011 with eight factory service centres and have two that are in the works. We continue to grow our business with centres of excellence for our modification work, three of our facilities have a full paint-shop and all of our staff are Diamond trained by FlightSafety – the highest level. Last year saw

us open our Mesa, Arizona, facility and saw a significant revamp of our Indianapolis, Indiana, facility. We've made massive investments into at least half of our facilities – new looks and a whole new customer experience."

And it is the customer experience that Howell really wants to focus on. "No matter where the customer goes the experience has to be phenomenal," he says. "And to make sure that happens we've hired a Vice President of Customer Excellence.

"We know we need to communicate with the customer better. We have to make sure that the expectations are the same on both sides. In the past expectations haven't necessarily been managed. For example, perhaps the customer leaves and expected three things to be done to his aircraft, but only two were.

"Now, with a Customer Excellence Manager, whose role is to coordinate with the aircraft before it arrives, and always working with the customer to make sure that expectations are both obvious, and met," he explains.

But it isn't just the customer facing side of the business that is being worked on. Howell says that there is a real focus on training and working with its suppliers and partners such as Rockwell Collins and Pratt & Whitney Canada. "We are partnering with them to get tooling and their requirements into our facilities. If a King Air landed and needed the engine to be worked on and shipped out, by working with P&WC we can keep the tooling at the facility so that a Hot Section Inspection could be done on-site," he says.

Howell plans to continue growing the company's services and says: "We feel that, from a customer perspective, the best experience is to go to the factory where you buy the aircraft, and get it maintained there. And we are looking at all parts of the world for our future growth."

In the US, Howell says that once the Delaware facility opens he will have "pretty much full coverage", but he certainly sees parts of

the world with a great influx of the company's aircraft such as Latin America, especially Brazil, the Middle East and Asia. "We are putting a significant number of aircraft into Asia and China and are looking at either maintenance investment, or partnership. Our goal is to get a factory footprint there, and we are evaluating all of our options. The company's leaderships is investing money to find ways that we can better support our customers," he says.

And one such way is in spares. "We realised we could do better when it came to spare parts, especially as we only had two parts centres: one in Dallas, Texas, and the other in Liege in Belgium. We invested \$25 million in parts last year and now we have facilities in London, Singapore and Dubai. We are putting parts into areas of the world where our aircraft are going. We are planning to open parts facilities in Sao Paulo, Moscow and somewhere in India. We expect somewhere in the region of six to eight facilities in total with a major investment in the inventory," he says.

Elsewhere Howell explains that, with the shift to more international orders, the company has had to add to "significant amounts" of field support engineers. He says that 2011 will see a 31% growth in international field support representatives and that 2012 will see a further increase of 24%. "We are putting people, parts and investment, into the regions where our aircraft are going. Before 2009 we were focused on North America, whereas now we're adapting and investing very quickly so that we can be well positioned to match up the customer expectations with the experience," explains Howell.

And while a factory presence is important, Howell does believe its ASF network is a key part in supporting the fleet. "We have key ASFs that we rely on every day. There are of course going to be areas in the world where we want to grow our factory brand, and then there are areas where perhaps we don't want to do so much.

“Expect to see us with a strategy around re-engining and some aerodynamic mods, such as winglets” (Howell)

“In China we have a fantastic partner in Hawker Pacific and its facility in Shanghai is just world class. As we expand our new aircraft into that region, especially those under warranty, it may see us partner up for a new facility, or we’ll build our own. And we’re completely happy with that situation,” says Howell.

While looking towards the future Howell says that on the three models that have had an in-depth analysis and a major mod made available, all three have had fuel burn reductions and reductions in carbon emissions. “What we are trying to do now is to figure out how we can bring alive the technology to achieve the same results in aircraft that are 10-15 years old. We want owners to understand that we will make investments to make the aircraft relative during its life. Specific fuel consumption and ‘more green’ is something we are targeting on everything we do. Where we can make these reductions we also try to improve the

aircraft by adding capability,” he says.

He highlights the Hawker 400XP as a perfect example. “From a high altitude airport such as Aspen you don’t necessarily have the range you need to conduct business from there. For example, let’s say before the mod on a 75F day you could go maybe 700nm, now you can go 2,000nm. We’re making significant changes to make the tools more useful to our customers,” he explains.

While trying to make the aircraft “greener” is more a case of cleaning up the aircraft, adding winglets and focusing on SFC, he says the company is also working with groups trying to “figure out what the fuel situation is going to be on piston-engined aircraft. We have paid a lot of attention to bio fuel, and we are all trying to see how we can understand it, and its use, better.”

Howell says that the best part of all the investments over the last 18 months is that

they haven’t gone unnoticed. “Over the last 18 months we’ve received the best product support scores in the last 15 years. We were the only OEM to realise a positive change in every jet category. We’ve made the investment to improve the experience and, so far, the customers see the results that are clearly communicated into the various publications and the fabulous survey results.”

In parts alone, 2009 saw a worldwide inventory of \$198 million that has grown to \$236 million in 2011. “We’ve probably had to invest about 20% of our business back in to make this work,” he says.

“We will be making some very significant announcements about the mods we’ve done so far, and how well they’re being accepted by our customers. It’s exciting to see the level of customer that is backing these mods and investing in them. That tells us, that we put the money in the right places,” he says. ●



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Aftermarket boost for Cessna

Cessna has seen signs of business aviation resurgence through its aftermarket sales and support operations. Phil Nasskau speaks to Brad Thress, Senior Vice President of Jet Products

Business for Thress is good. He says that so far he expects revenues to be increased by about 10% over 2010. "We are feeling the recovery in the aftermarket [segment], which has been split pretty equally between servicing and parts sales. Both are up significantly in equal proportions.

"We see a solid recovery," he says. He adds that average utilisation of the fleet is "sneaking up in a sustained way" compared with 2009, when the average utilisation was 0.66 hours per day per aircraft and that this figure is now at 0.71 hours per day per aircraft.

Part of Cessna's place in the industry resurgence is bolstered by its efforts in modernisation. With around 6,000 Citations in the fleet, Thress says that the company is trying to bolster the flying fleet by keeping "aircraft up to speed and getting models into regulatory compliance such as RVSM and WAAS. We have already done a lot of work in that area," he explains.

Other modernisation packages include glass cockpit retrofits for the legacy Citation 500 and Citation 650 series where Cessna has partnered with ISS&F for what it calls ADVIZ. Elsewhere it has partnered with Garmin to offer the G1000 STC and retrofit for original CJs which Thress estimates at around 400 aircraft, and adds WAAS certification.

Elsewhere it has certified the Primus Elite upgrade for the Citation X, which equips the X

with Quartz Screens allows video capability for ground link weather, charts and maps. While smaller retrofits include WAAS kits and Wi-Fi connectivity in the cabins, ADS-B for all Citation models, Controller Pilot Data Link Communications for all models and further auto-throttle options.

Presently Cessna has certified WAAS solutions for the Sovereign, XL/XLS which offer a choice between single and dual Universal UNS-1EspW systems – the single unit features LPV monitoring, the Encore/Ultra with a Universal system, and choices between single and dual Collins FMS for the CJ1+, CJ2+ and CJ3.

And it is now working on obtaining WAAS certification for the CJ1 and CJ2 that the company says is projected to be available in early 2012. Meanwhile, it says that certification is pending for the Model 560 Citation V, Model 650 Citation III, VI and VII with various Universal systems.

On the Wi-Fi side it has certified systems for the X, Sovereign and XL/XLS/XLS+ aircraft with either Aircell ATG 4000 or with an Aircell ATG 5000 standalone HSD/Wi-Fi system that is only available for US aircraft. It is working on certifications for the CJ3 and Model 650 Citation III, VI and VII.

Thress sees modernisation and performance increases as a potential for growth. "We are investing in the future with systems like autothrottle for the Citation X. We are trying to give the

legacy aircraft operators the opportunity to upgrade their aircraft," he says.

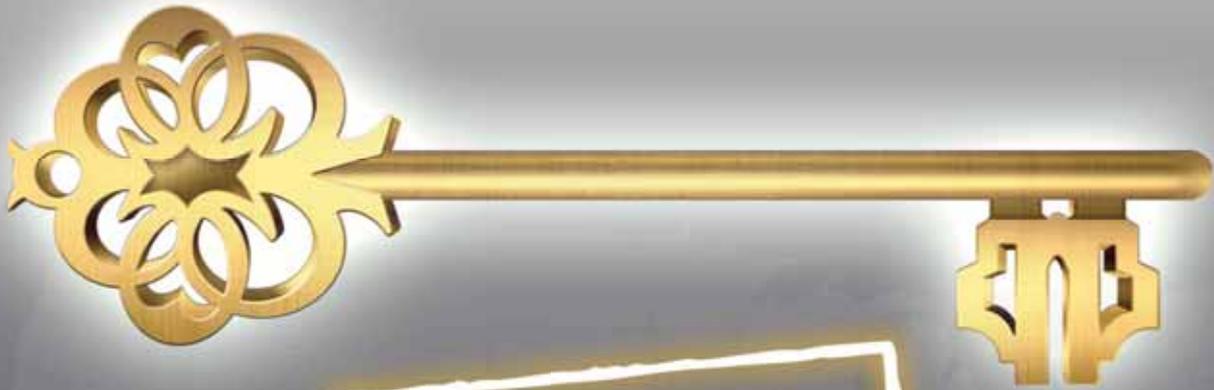
And while, for Thress, it is difficult to "separate the why, what we know is that the more we offer the more we can sell. People are buying into our used fleet, and the Cessna used fleet is declining, which is positive for us as a lot of these aircraft may come in for pre-inspection and then have extra work done," he says.

But it is not just maintenance and mods that have been the focus, with a decline in new aircraft deliveries Cessna has had extra capacity in its paint shop, and in the last six months Thress says approximately 20 customer aircraft have been in for a factory re-spray. "Of course we can offer interior refurbishments as well," he says. "We will continue to offer avionics upgrades on legacy models, and we are looking to certify the IS&S system on other models – there are some models that still don't have a WAAS solution."

Away from the aftermarket options there has been a focus on improving its service offerings. Thress describes the company's approach as two-fold. "Firstly taking the service to the customer and secondly globalisation, and what we are looking for in terms of a global footprint," he says. He adds that the brand new service centre in Valencia is due to be operational some time during September 2012 with an initial capacity of 80,000 man hours per year and expects this to grow steadily to 150,000 man hours and it covers around 80,000ft².

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Thress says the Valencia facility will be a significant step in helping to service the European fleet and will bolster its services at the only factory owned centre in Le Bourget. In fact, he says that technicians have already been hired from all over Europe, with B1 and B2 licenses, and have spent around six months in ground school learning the aircraft. They will now spend a year at facilities in the US actively working on the aircraft so that they already have experience when the new centre opens next year.

He reasons that when Valencia was chosen as the site the Iberian peninsula was seeing tremendous growth. "We do have a set of criteria that we use for selecting locations for service facilities. We like to choose a destination that customers want to go to, for example Orlando, Florida. It's a busy service centre, even though there aren't many Citations based there, it's a desirable destination. Naturally we try and stay away from airports that are dominated by commercial carriers, but we also look for locations along busy corridors. Here, in the US, we benefit from the New York to Florida corridor, which is why our Greensboro facility stays busy with a drop in traffic on the East Coast.

"Valencia is near Mallorca and close to France's south coast and these factors certainly helped. But we always make sure to look for a place where our technicians and management can afford to live," he says.

Elsewhere in Europe Thress has plans to offer more service options out of Textron sister company Bell Helicopter's Prague FBO. "We've been offering line maintenance from the FBO since last year, and now we want to grow this to a full service centre to be a piece of our European service network," he says. Cessna is also sharing a parts facility in Amsterdam with Bell and, while Thress admits there was some work to be done to make sure it all came together, there are no real difficulties in sharing with Bell.

The focus of the facility in Amsterdam is for parts availability to its European customers, says Thress. "Currently, we have 3,000 part numbers in stock, originally designed for AOG situations. However we are growing this to a fully stocked store that will have in excess of 10,000 part numbers.

"We are working on a process to get the parts pre-cleared into the EU so that we can ship them faster. At the moment it can take us six hours.

We're not happy with this and we are working on fixing this."

Expanding its global footprint is key for the future of the company. Thress says: "We are looking around the planet as to where we need to be in the future. In the past we would wait until we had a significant population [of aircraft] or a critical mass before establishing a service facility because we wanted it to be profitable.

"Now we're taking a different approach. We are putting in service centres early in locations where we think the growth will happen. We're also looking at mitigating some of the risk by setting up JVs with Bell. We know that initially there won't be a great deal of customers but it will grow. We've already broken ground on the first Bell/Cessna service centre at Singapore's Seletar airport."

China is, of course, on Thress' radar and he says that there may be further news on this at NBAA. However he did say that the company is looking at several cities in South Eastern China somewhere between Hong Kong and Shanghai. Thereafter he expects some activity in India, probably not until 2013. "But we are starting the ball rolling on the Indian base. It will be small compared to the US, but it will act as a toehold and grow as the fleet in India grows," he explains.

In the Middle East, Thress is keen to point out the excellent relationship with Saudi Arabia's Wallan Aviation and an extensive network of ASFs. However, he says: "We continue to rely on our partners in the Middle East to offer maintenance, but it is likely that we will build a facility with Bell somewhere in the more northern parts of the Middle East."

Thress believes that opening up joint venture facilities with Bell makes perfect sense for emerging markets. "It makes sense capital wise and we can share a general manager as well as parts cribs, tool cribs and the overheads. This makes it particularly efficient in new markets. Of course we are just learning the ropes, but we would consider this as a strategy for moving forward," he explains. At present Cessna has eight factory owned facilities in the US, two in Europe with the third under construction. Europe is also bolstered by a network of 13 ASFs.

A key point for Thress is Cessna's Service Direct, which is essentially modified trucks that allow mobile maintenance outside the main-

“We will continue to offer avionics upgrades on legacy models, and we are looking to certify the IS&S system on other models” (Thress)

tenance hangar. “We can do scheduled maintenance as well as AOG situations. We also have more trucks, and feel we make better use of them than our competitors,” he says. Presently there are 14 Mobile Service Units (MSU) in the US (based away from service centres) and two in Europe. There is one in France and one in Germany, however a third MSU is expected to come online sometime in September this year. Thress says that the company is considering basing the third European truck in Italy as it recently lost an ASF, due to the effects of the recession, and “we need to offer the Italian Citation fleet some service,” he says.

He hails the MSUs as being very successful and plans to add to the US fleet with another five trucks this year. He explains: “Those 14 trucks do about half of the business of a service centre. We charge normal rates, just adding a mileage rate for the truck. But the other advantage of these trucks is that it has helped us reconnect with people who had stopped coming to the factory serv-

ice centres. It’s the same as happens with cars, as it gets older people stop coming to the factory for maintenance.

“Of course once our guy shows up at the hangar you get to know him, trust him and of course you’re gonna call Bob and his truck from Cessna!” he says.

In addition to the MSUs, Thress says there are 16 service vehicles based at service centres that do the same thing as the bigger MSUs but on a much smaller scale. “An MSU has hydraulic mules, DC power, nitrogen, and almost everything you could want or need. The service vehicles are more for Line Replacement Units or limited inspection work. So between the two of them we have about 30 road vehicles taking service to our customers,” he says.

Of course the ground network is supported with an aircraft that the company calls its ART (Air Response Team), and while it mostly flies domestically in the US, it sometimes heads over to Canada or Mexico. “We do two things with the

aircraft. We take parts and/or technicians to an AOG aircraft, and if need be we can take the passengers onwards in the CJ3 too,” he says.

For truly remote areas Thress highlights the company’s Homeservice. A standard shipping container that features parts and tooling that is then loaded with everything needed to support an aircraft. Something the company has done to support a Sovereign in Egypt is to place the container beside the hangar for it to hold consumables. “We took some technicians to help them keep the Sovereign up and running,” he says.

Taking the service to the customer is something that Thress believes is becoming increasingly popular. “We need to grow the MSUs some more. At a guess I’d expect about eight more a year. If we are finishing this year with 20 trucks we would certainly be aiming at 25-30 for 2012. It’s almost like the windshield business: we come to you. We have to keep our eye on this because traditionally aviation runs behind the curve,” he concludes. ●

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Horm Irani and Steve Jones (right) at EBACE

Al Bateen: living the Abu Dhabi dream

Having taken up the reins as General Manager of Al Bateen Executive Airport, Steve Jones is busy implementing ADAC's plan to realise this airport's full potential as a dedicated business aviation base. Jo Murray reports on what is turning out to be a very successful year for this Abu Dhabi city centre based airport

Al Bateen has been through several incarnations. First it was the original Abu Dhabi International Airport. As the new international airport came on stream, Al Bateen became a military base and now it has been handed back to civil control with the military operations eventually migrating to a new base.

This has left a very sizeable footprint on which to develop a business-aviation-only airport. The primary infrastructure is already in place, including a 3,200m long (40m wide) runway. Most of the airport buildings are arranged across one side of the site. A collection of hangars, engineering workshops and a commercial-style terminal building have been inherited from the airport's previous incarnations. There is also a VIP terminal building as well as a collection of offices. One of the office blocks is occupied by the Gulf Centre for Aviation Studies (GCAS), the training arm of ADAC

which offers broad Airport and Aviation training modules to promote best practice in the aviation industry in the region.

At 2.2 square km, the land allocated to the airport is more than adequate for all Al Bateen's ongoing plans, confirms Jones. "We have large areas of apron, large parking areas – in fact we have parking for about 100 business jets," he points out. "We also have land available on which to build new hangars– we have plenty of land to develop the airport going forward."

The airport itself is located inside the capital city boundaries and serves governmental, business and leisure sectors at close proximity to passengers' ultimate destinations. "We are right in the middle of the place to be," says Jones. "The strategic aim is to develop a business aviation centre which fits well with the development of Abu Dhabi."

In terms of enhancing the infrastructure and its equipment, Jones points out that the airport is already under the radar control of

the international airport – but the decision was taken last year to install an instrument landing system (ILS) too. "Because this was an ex-military facility, we needed to elevate some of the infrastructure – refurbish it effectively – in line with our strategy to be a very high quality business aviation airport," says Jones. "We have spent a lot of money on the rehabilitation of aprons, taxiways and the runway to get them to a very high standard. We have also improved a lot of the offices and buildings."

In fact, to date, \$170 million has been spent on the ILS, runway refurbishment, hangar refurbishment and other projects. "We've spent a considerable amount of money modernising, refurbishing and preparing the airport, ready for its place as a dedicated business airport," says Jones, "but we've got further improvement plans. Hangars are progressively being transferred from military to the civil side and our plan is to refurbish them and perhaps replace the hangar doors. We've got more work to do on aprons and runways as well."

“There is an evolving MRO capability but we don’t intend to get into MRO ourselves” (Jones)



Infrastructure aside, Al Bateen will also play host to service-providers as well as acting as a service-provider itself. So where does Jones draw the line in terms of service provision? “We are developing a model whereby, in the first instance, to make sure that the airport has a very high quality FBO (including the new crew facility which we are in the process of building) we have created Dhabijet, which is a dedicated FBO/handling service, operated by Al Bateen Executive Airport. We have brought in experts from established FBOs and we have set the standard for very high quality services. These go hand in glove with the other facilities that exist at the airport,” says Jones.

“Strategically, once we get Dhabijet established, and in partnership with our other base charter operators, we will get the volume to a certain level – maybe in two years’ time – when we may then open up the airport to other FBO operators who will offer choice to customers. If we get the right level of traffic volume, I think this could be a three-FBO model,” he adds. In the longer term, the concept of Dhabijet could also be taken to other business aviation airports.

Jones confirms that the airport itself does not plan to offer maintenance services. “We have base operators with MRO capability here already and Jet Aviation (already present in Dubai) is opening a support office here too. We have close working relationships with these base tenants and we believe that, through the combination of tenants, the airport will offer a full suite of line support here,” he says. “There

is an evolving MRO capability but we don’t intend to get into MRO ourselves.” The airport wishes to attract many aviation companies to the airport which is expected to lead to a thriving and competitive support environment.

To date, air traffic growth at Al Bateen has already been remarkable. The executive airport announced a 25% increase in aircraft movements in April 2011 compared with April 2010. The rise for the first quarter compared with last year was 18%.

When asked about the setting of comparatively low landing fees at Al Bateen, Jones says: “We certainly want to be positioned very competitively. We don’t want to be anything other than the best value place to go particularly for tech stops,” adding that having comparatively low landing fees is the icing on the cake at Al Bateen – it is not the main driver for growth. “The growth is driven predominantly by new customers – and landing at Al Bateen is simply very easy.”

The hike in traffic will also be aided by new base operators joining the Al Bateen community; the latest being Rotana Jet Aviation which commenced private jet operations at the beginning of April 2011 with a Gulfstream G450. The company has committed to leasing a large hangar at Al Bateen, where it will develop and expand its scope of services to offer line maintenance and other technical works. In addition to corporate/private air charters, Rotana Jet offers a range of specialist aviation services, including aircraft management and consultancy.

Adding to the attraction of Al Bateen Executive Airport is Free Zone status which will make it easier for international companies to set up businesses in the area. This will come into effect in early 2012. “To be ready for that we need a good supply of high quality offices – and we’re doing a lot of refurbishment work at the moment on that. There is plenty of office stock here and it is being prepared for commercial use,” says Jones.

There are other plans on the agenda too. “We are supporting the development of executive in flight catering services here. We are in discussions with a very large catering group to set up a state-of-the-art executive & VIP catering facility. Linked to that, we are developing retail – a retail centre with various shops, banks, car showrooms and a conference centre. We have buildings that could be used as hotels but the initial focus will be on retail and offices,” he says.

Commenting on the Middle East generally, Jones says that the patterns for business aviation growth in the Middle East in the short-term is uncertain however in the medium to long-term the region will undoubtedly be one of the most important business aviation markets. In relation to his airport, he says: “If you look at the growth in Abu Dhabi, it is very dynamic. My feeling is that Al Bateen’s growth is driven by our competitive position and our product. We have picked up some organic growth but our percentage growth is out of kilter with established airport operators.”

He concludes: “Therefore we must be winning market share.” ●



IACOBUCCI | HF Seats: the most exclusive mix of design and comfort

A sleek modern design and the use of premium materials, make the IACOBUCCI HF VIP Seats the most exclusive choice for private jet customers. Unique products that exude quality and promise a premium flying experience whilst balancing innovation and progressive styling. The latest of the two seats has been developed enhancing the concepts expressed in the first prototype, designed with the collaboration of BMW Group DesignworksUSA, in order to respond to the different technical and styling needs of the clients.

IACOBUCCI HF Group worldwide leader manufacturer of galley inserts for commercial and business aviation, has recently created a new business unit in order to manage this exclusive product line, that boasts two different models in which comfort and design are blend together. The two new seats have been realized with extreme care to all details reflecting the real needs of customers and the latest seating market trend both in terms of product specifications, functionalities and options. As a result of long pressure mapping tests the seats slim volume expresses lightness, intelligent cushioning communicates comfort and a meticulous attention to details arises from a great sense of innovation and quality. The product development was market driven with transparent and customizable options for OEMs.

The first one features a 23" seat width, a fixed track fitting installation, a wide and comfortable 45" backrest with personalized recline mechanism, including a 3-way headrest provides a wide range of adjustments: vertical, horizontal and tilting features, plus ear flaps enhance passenger comfort in rest position. The new VIP Seat guarantees maximum comfort with full fractioned drop-down armrest together with an extendable leg rest including a foldable manual footrest too.

<<The project team developed a seat ergonomically responding to the form of the human body. The mechanical 360° swivel enhance the useful space into the cabin while the light structure and the smooth movements makes it extremely lightweight and easy to be installed and maintained reducing operation costs>> - said Riccardo Palmeri Iacobucci HF Group Marketing Director. <<Designed and

developed with a customer-oriented approach, the VIP Seat can be customized to suit individual needs and fit a wide variety of cabin interior designs, providing the maximum flexibility and integration on board. >>

The second VIP Seat has entirely been realized in collaboration with DesignworksUSA, guaranteeing a right mix of technology, innovation and design to the market and offering the favourable conditions to conceive a premium seat design focused on the theme of perceived lightness. To enhance this concept the designers removed material from the armrest to emphasize transparency and openness and created an attractive shape featuring fresh, reduced and unique attributes. The final design result is a graceful seat ready to enhance any aircraft interiors.

Featuring a single back rest structure with the seat height of 45-46" and 7" deployable and extendable leg rest, it guarantees maximum comfort and proper support of the body in various seating positions. A specific "cradle" recline mechanism with a seat plan tilt coordinated with backrest recline and a fully retractable armrest with friction drop-down movement convert the seat surface into a fully flat flawless bad. The headrest movement includes vertical, horizontal and tilting features. The seat includes a floor tracking mechanism feature to give passengers a more useful space. A slim backrest, a 21" seat width combined with a full berthing recline and drop down armrests in a light design concur to make the seat adaptable for business jets. ●

IACOBUCCI HF Group will exhibit at the greatest upcoming international air show, the NBAA (Las Vegas, 10-12 October 2011 - Booth N2526) and the Dubai Airshow (13-17 November 2011- Booth E548).

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BizJet International: it's a question of value

There is a small slice of German-owned industry tucked away in Tulsa, Oklahoma, called BizJet International Sales and Support, Inc. As a member of the Lufthansa Technik Group, this US based facility offers a broad spectrum of services, including VIP interior completions, engine overhaul and maintenance and FBO services. BizJet adheres to all the high standards of production we expect from the German giant, but has its own story to tell as a diverse and growing business. Jo Murray speaks to Brian Barber, Vice President, Sales & Marketing, BizJet International Sales & Support Inc.

Established in 1986 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, BizJet has not always fallen under the umbrella of the Lufthansa Technik Group. The German company's ownership came much later in 2000. The Tulsa Company had always – and still does – focus mainly on business aviation rather than the commercial airline sector. So what was Lufthansa Technik seeking to achieve through this US acquisition? Barber responds: "This was mostly about gaining market share in the private business sector, which also includes completions." Of course, the US offers one of the most dynamic business aviation markets, so a US acquisition, such as BizJet, provided a perfect fit.

Today, there are three business segments to BizJet, the first of which is engine MRO. "The



engine MRO side of the business, which caters to three engine types: the Rolls-Royce Spey Mk511-6, Tay Mk611-8 and Tay Mk620/650. The addition of the Tay Mk620/650 for the Lufthansa operated or an affiliated airline is very exciting for us which allows us to embark on the commercial airline sector. The engine part of the business has grown at a steady pace and over the last seven years, BizJet has gained more market share each year," Barber says.

The second segment encompasses VIP jet refurbishment, full completions and MRO for narrow body aircraft. "Our capabilities include the Boeing 737 BBJs and Airbus ACJs – which is the A318 Elite, A318, A319 and A320 family," says Barber. When asked whether the completions side of the business satisfies purely US market demand, he responds: "We initially started with US cus-

“Although we can utilise the strengths and resources of Hamburg, we pride ourselves in becoming a fully stand alone operation” (Barber)

tomers, but our customer base now expands to markets all over the world.”

Barber explains that, on the completions side, there is a very coordinated sales team approach between BizJet and Lufthansa Technik in Hamburg. The reason for this approach was due to Hamburg forecasting capacity restraints at the height of the market. “Thus, in 2008, BizJet entering the completions business provided additional production capacity,” says Barber. “We have worked with the Hamburg sales team on many projects and it’s a winning combination to have them on our side.”



With Airbus as its partner, Lufthansa Technik in Hamburg and BizJet, they can offer a cleverly packaged A318 completions project called the Elite. This interior completion can take place at both facilities, but the majority of them have taken place in Tulsa, Oklahoma. “Offering an innovative concept, with a generally standardised VIP cabin configuration, allows an accelerated completion turn time with the advantage of a lower cost solution,” says Barber. “Airbus has done an outstanding job of offering this to their customers and we are very proud to be their completion partner of choice for the Elites.”

Barber explains that, in the world of VIP jet completions, BizJet offers the same services in Tulsa as its parent company in Hamburg. “Although we can utilise the strengths and resources of Hamburg, we pride ourselves

in becoming a fully stand alone operation,” he confirms. “We have our own engineering, design teams, production and certification experts dedicated to our facility here in Tulsa. As a member of the Lufthansa Group, we also have access to a globe-spanning support network if needed.”

Recently a third completion line has been opened and BizJet now has three airplanes in the hangers. Barber explains that there are plans in place to continue to grow, and to this end, they are still hiring. “We’ve doubled the workforce for completions this past

year and this brings responsibilities in terms of training and development. This hiring effort is to support new business for continued expansion of the VIP completion segment.”

“We are very careful to grow the business at a rate that we can support,” he says, adding that BizJet refuses to over-commit. “Our growth plans have been slower than many of the other completion centres but we have made a decision to only take on what we can commit to and complete. Our philosophy is only to commit to what we are confident we can deliver. Because of this, we have turned away business that we could not support.”

Barber points out that when you ramp up from one production line to three in a year, there is a lot of growth to manage. In fact, there is a fourth production line waiting in the wings and Barber expects that facility to be up

and running by the end of 2012.

The final part of the BizJet service segment is the full-service FBO facility located in Tulsa – perhaps a surprising addition to the business portfolio, but the rationale for operating an FBO is a sound one. Barber explains: “Because Tulsa is right in the middle of the US, we see a lot of customers who are flying from east coast to west coast that need to stop for fuel. We offer all the amenities for passengers and pilots including a comfortable lounge, conference rooms and concierge services.”

The combination of the three service areas delivers an interesting market portfolio. Barber talks in terms of turn-time achievements on the engine front that are met through keeping the operation lean and customer service levels high. He says that success on the completions segment is delivered through carefully consulting with the client, thoroughly understanding the expectations and not over committing or over selling the product.

In the end, he says, it is a question of value. “We value our integrity and providing world-class completions, technical services, and trend-setting product innovations and most importantly, delivering what the customer expects. This is how we do business!” ●





CRS Jet Spares: managing commodities at home and away

Armando Leighton, President, CRS Jet Spares has grown the business from his garage to the international market through supplying the right parts at the right time and with the right attitude to customer service. Jo Murray speaks to him

Founding a parts supply business is complex – especially when the world's business aviation fleets are so diverse, so scattered and aircraft values fluctuate with macro-economic conditions. It is easy to imagine that such a business would fall victim to numerous external pressures as the aviation industry weaves its way through its cycles. Leighton clearly takes all these pressures in his stride. He has grown his business from a domestic garage

operation to the international business it is today. "I established the business in 1982," he says. "I specialised in one aircraft type: the Rockwell Sabreliner." Knowledge of the military market, a role in an MRO business focussing on parts procurement and experience inside a charter company delivered to Leighton all the insights he needed in the market he now serves.

What he discovered from working inside a charter operation was that parts procurement was simple but expensive – there was no oppor-

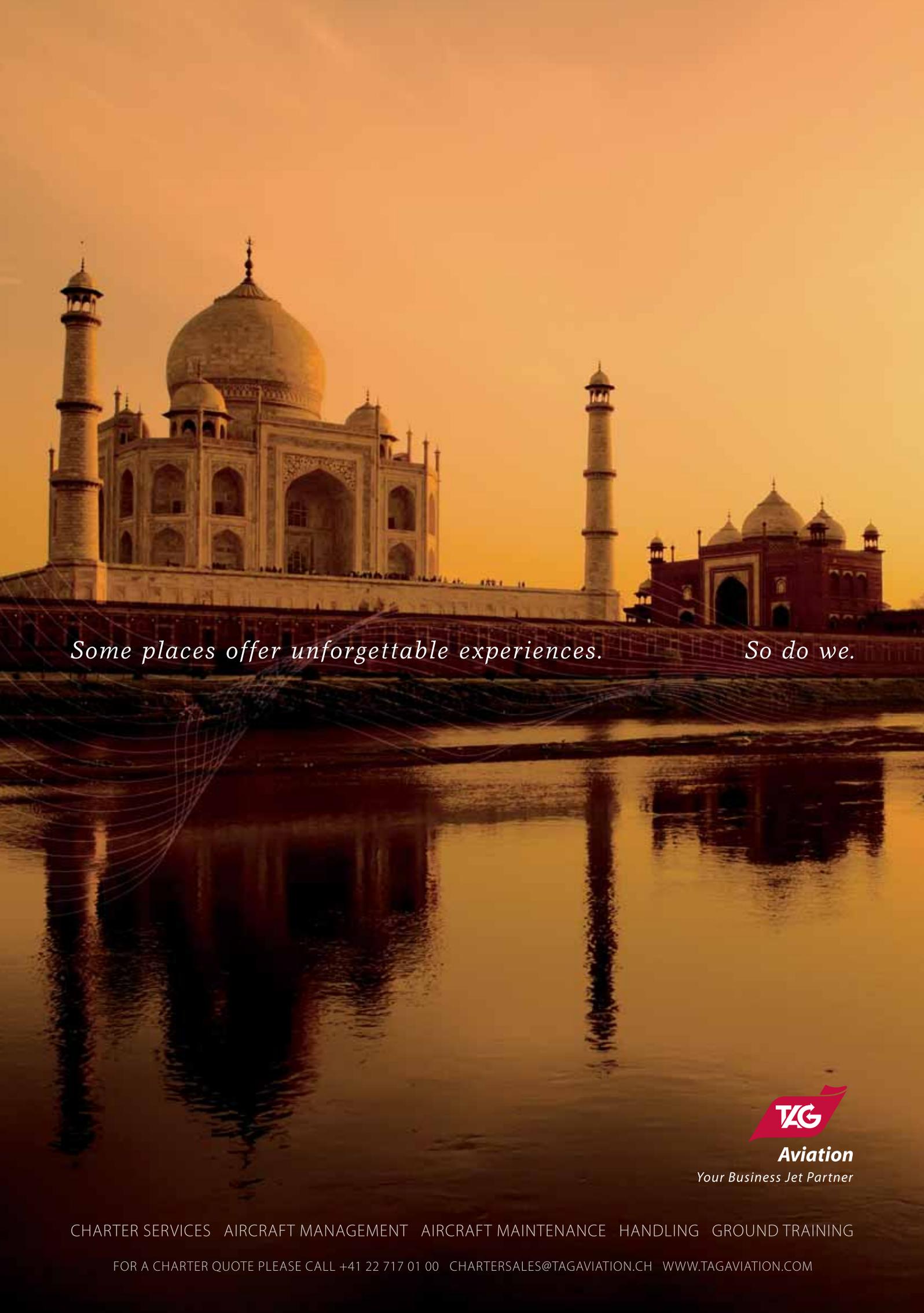
tunity to provide savings. This is what prompted Leighton to strike out on his own, build his inventory and then eventually – in the first instance – offer it to the FAA which flew several Sabreliners in the 1980s. "As a small company I was able to generate a lot of sales as a low bidder on contract offerings," he explains.

And so CRS Jet Spares was born, initially in a very small way but through taking baby steps, inventory, personnel and knowledge were built up to form the rotables supply business it is today. In fact, his first employee was his mother, Mirta Chang, who still works to this day at CRS at age 75.

The model is simple: to supply overhauled airworthy spare parts, take back unserviceable components, have them serviced by a third-party, and then deliver the overhauled components back into CRS stock if appropriate. A fee is charged for the exchange of the unserviceable component with the reconditioned or new part. "The FAA/JAA approved repair stations must be very good partners in being able to deliver a quality repair/overhaul on a timely basis while providing the right savings that can be passed on to the customers," he says. Leighton summarises the business model like this: "We're managing commodities in a particular fashion: having the right parts at the right time, and making the appropriate investments into particular aircraft platforms."

Although Leighton started with the Rockwell Sabreliner in 1982, he saw the need to diversify into other aircraft types. "By year two I got into the Cessna Citation. I purchased an aircraft and disassembled it. Then I purchased a Lockheed Jetstar and evolved the business into Learjets and Falcons. We perpetually reinvest into critical parts covering all ATA chapters and make the inventory more diverse," he says. "I felt that if I wanted to gain a competitive edge it would be better to be able to service several aircraft types." By year 10, CRS Jet Spares was already working with 10-15 aircraft platforms and, today, the company services almost 30 – when all the aircraft family variants are included. "Today we are looking at later models of Gulfstream, Dassault, Hawker Raytheon and Bombardier – Learjets, the Challenger line, and the Global Express," points out Leighton.

But it is not just aircraft types that CRS Jet Spares is delving deeper into; it is also



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“We have always tried to be forerunners and anticipate trends” (Leighton)

diversifying its geographic markets. “As we expanded our aircraft platforms, we continued to build a global footprint through representations and partnerships beyond the US market that we have been servicing since those early years,” says Leighton. Most of the \$60 million inventory is maintained in the Ft Lauderdale, Florida, headquarters; however, much has been shifted to other stocking locations such as the UK, France, Pacific Rim, and there is an eye on India in the near future. Today, there is inventory held in California and Washington State with seasoned CRS representatives based in Texas, New York, California and Minnesota, with the western and eastern locations bleeding into Canada on both coastlines.

But the growth does not stop there. “We have always tried to be forerunners and anticipate trends. Traditionally we have been a domestic company with some international sales, but it was very little – less than 5% in the 1990s. That has grown to over 20% for us now,” says Leighton. “Wherever there’s wealth there’s jets. We have been following the trends and we have been looking at Brazil which has the second largest population of jets in the world after the US. Their wealth and technology has ramped up immensely in the last 20 years.”

CRS Jet Spares is very close to establishing a presence in Brazil, with the benefit of around 20 years’ experience trading with clients in the

country. “With the economic set-back, we have seen many quality jets leave the US and go to other thriving countries where they have the cash and the wherewithal to be able to purchase these jets at prices 40-50% less than previously traded,” says Leighton. “Wherever they go, we follow them.” This includes Australia, Dubai, Europe, Russia, India and China.

“When it comes to the logistics for supplying parts now that these aircraft are established in their respective countries, we now see that they have a requirement for spares,” says Leighton. Of course spares distribution within the US is extremely easy – there is no border or customs to tackle. When it comes to exporting internationally, that is a different story.

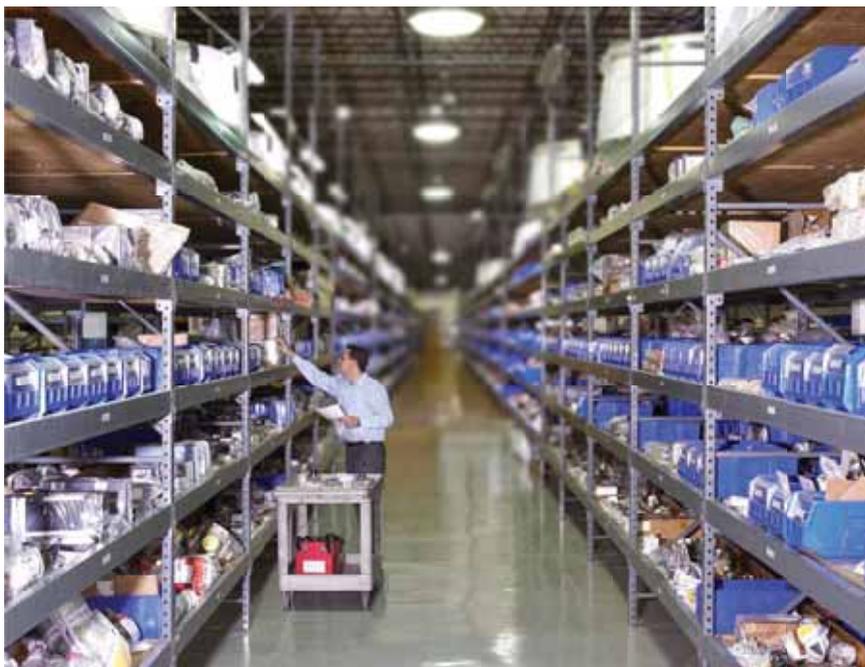
Logistics is a whole new ballgame when it comes to export. “You need to plan properly in addition to making additional investment in aircraft parts for the platform you want to support,” he says. So is partnership the way forward on the logistics front? “We feel it’s good to partner. Many companies have established bricks and mortar in the past and historically have not done that well. We feel that partnerships are key.” For CRS Jet Spares, having an international presence has not just meant export; it has also meant locating inventory in overseas markets. Leighton says that there is no major need to procure additional inventory specifically for international lo-

cations – it is simply a question of relocating from their diverse inventory and properly managing.

International markets aside, CRS Jet Spares is also evolving – as the market shifts – in terms of its client base. Traditionally corporate flight departments have formed the bulk of its client portfolio, but with the shrinking and closure of flight departments as the fractional share found favour, so CRS Jet Spares adjusted with the landscape of the industry. And then there was consolidation through charter company management of individually owned aircraft. This resulted in charter companies with larger fleets although fewer of these aircraft were actually owned. Consolidation in the charter market was good news for CRS Jet Spares – it meant having more of a captive audience when making sales calls and knocking on hangar doors. Of course the economic slump has brought a further layer of change to the business aviation market and therefore the spare parts business –prompting a certain level of internationalisation.

When asked whether the downturn has had positive effects in terms of being offered attractively priced spares and even whole aircraft for salvage, Leighton responds: “It has. Many operations went out of business and sold off aircraft and their residual inventories. We have been able to acquire a lot of inventory at favourable pricing that was not there four years ago.” The quid pro quo is that as aircraft values slumped, financiers put pressure on owners to pursue the salvage route in order to realise value from the assets. “The concern is that when you have so many aircraft parted out, it drives the market price for the parts down. That’s great for the owner/operator but we have to look at the profitability of those parts in order to maintain the high standards of the programmes we offer our customers. Competition on legacy aircraft dictates whether we continue to compete or exit certain aircraft platforms.

This is a complex balancing act built on knowledge, familiarity and doing the numbers. There is nothing haphazard about the parts business although the bar has been raised with AS9120 Quality Standards in recent years. Future-proofing means growing the business into newer aircraft types – and that is exactly what Leighton is doing today as the business he founded nearly 30 years ago grows increasingly complex and voluminous. ●



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Signature offers dedicated fuelling services during inspections at Shannon Airport



Shannon: a small slice of America

On February 23, 2010, the US Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and US Ambassador to Ireland Daniel M Rooney formally announced the expansion of preclearance services for private aircraft departing Ireland's Shannon Airport for the US beginning March 1, 2010. Then – and now – Shannon Airport became unique in that it is the only airport in the world to offer private passengers pre-clearance to 220 US locations without stepping on US soil. Jo Murray reports

Flights to the US from Shannon are essentially treated in the same way as US domestic flights when they land on US soil, explains Joe Buckley, Business Development Manager at Shannon Airport. "And passengers receive a friendly Irish welcome," he adds. Essentially, by placing US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at a business aviation gateway to the US situated outside the US – namely at Shannon Airport – congestion at border control within the US for private passengers can be avoided, thereby facilitating the rapid movement of passengers through the FBO stateside.

CBP is one of the Department of Homeland Security's largest and most complex organisations. Its stated priority is to keep terrorists and weapons out of the US. It also has responsibility for securing and facilitating trade and travel while enforcing hundreds of US regulations, including immigration and drug laws. CBP has a huge range of responsibilities and, for the last 18 months, they have been executed magnificently

at this western point of Ireland.

The new procedures prompted some infrastructure changes at the airport, including the completion of a purpose-built facility for business aviation passengers. The airport also offers advantages in both the delivery and price of fuel. Ships berthed in the adjacent River Shannon pump fuel along pipes to tanks enabling "hydrant fuelling". The airport also enjoys a large land bank for development should it become necessary and Shannon has already demonstrated

that it is committed to encouraging business aviation, not least by refraining from imposing curfews and slots.

Two international service providers have set up bases here: Universal Aviation and Signature Flight Support. Derek Collins, General Manager at Universal Aviation Shannon, says that there are definitely more enquiries coming through about pre-clearance. "Word is getting around," he says. "There is a marked increase in enquiries, especially from the Middle East." Universal Aviation Shannon facilitated the ground support for the first two private flights to pre-clear all Customs and Immigration at the new facility last year.

Michael Ryan, General Manager Ireland, Signature Flight Support says that he has high hopes for the Shannon operation. He is hoping to see three to four pre-cleared flights a day following the recent relaxation of regulations at Shannon and Signature is using its worldwide network of 108 locations to spread the word. Signature offers dedicated fuelling services during inspections along with the only FBO



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“Word is getting around. There is a marked increase in enquiries, especially from the Middle East” (Collins)



While Shannon may now offer an even quicker stop prior to crossing the Atlantic, Buckley says there's no reason flight crews and their passengers couldn't pause and stay awhile, too. "We're more than an airport at the edge of the Atlantic for a technical stop," he says. "We're focusing very strongly on business aviation with the development of a Centre of Excellence, and we'd like to see companies make investments here. Shannon, after all, has the largest concentration of US multi-national companies in any one industrial location in Ireland. We also have a unique tourism package and would love for people to stay over from time to time to enjoy this. We have got a number of five-star castle hotels and while here visitors can take a trip to visitor attractions of world renown in this neck of the woods, including the Cliffs of Moher, or even play a round at some of the breathtaking links golf courses in the region."

Both Collins and Ryan point out that Shannon has been an aviation trailblazer in many respects. It has been a world class aircraft leasing location (GPA was based here), it has had a thriving MRO community and duty free sales were born here.

Now, a major marketing programme is underway. Ryan says: "Shannon now has a unique global selling point. It can become a crossroads for international business aviation and there are many opportunities that will flow from this. The follow-through could include becoming a registration and service centre for corporate jets and a back-office for operators. In turn, this will potentially bring a lot of high net-worth individuals to Shannon and create a tourism and potential foreign direct investment opportunity as well."

Speaking at a joint Shannon Airport and Shannon Development conference in June 2011, Sean Raftery, Managing Director, Universal Aviation UK and Ireland, said that opportunity now knocks for Shannon. "As the company that handled the first aircraft to pre-clear under the new streamlined process, we are excited to say that it works. Our clients were impressed with the speed of the process. With this increased efficiency, coupled with a favourable tax regime, and Shannon's strategic location, Shannon is now an even more time and cost-efficient tech stop for operators travelling from Europe or the Middle East to the US." ●

facilities, customer lounge and hangarage on the main airport apron.

Ryan is referring to the easing of restrictions on the use of auxiliary power units (APUs) or ground power units (GPUs) during radiation screening of business aircraft inbound to the US. Ryan explains that this relaxation of CBP regulations makes a massive difference. By running an APU or GPU, the aircraft's electrical systems continue to operate. This is vital because it avoids spending time having to power the aircraft back up following the Radiation Isotope Identifier (RIID) scan and it prevents the loss of the flight data loaded into the aircraft's systems. Flight crews are then not burdened with reloading this data and vital time on the ground at Shannon is reduced. Ryan explains that this means a layover of 90 minutes is now down to 60 minutes - or even 45 in exceptional circumstances.

Buckley adds in relation to the first pre-clearance flight since the policy change: "Looking at the timings of it, the aircraft blocked on at 0915, and blocked off at 1000. From startup to

shutdown, 45 minutes. That included CBP pre-clearance with the APU on, refuelling, and flight plan clearance."

As NBAA reported, effective June 15, 2011, APUs may remain on while RIID checks are conducted on business aircraft entering the US, as long as exhaust vents for those units are 8ft off the ground or higher. Aircraft with APU exhaust outlets lower than 8ft may still need to shut down, but power may be maintained through use of GPUs. The decision followed nearly two years of work between NBAA and CBP to find an acceptable compromise. "Now, we may not always achieve a 45-minute turn," Buckley notes. "Sometimes we may even be faster, though a 60-minute turn is now a realistic expectation."

CBP had been concerned that hot exhaust from APUs could harm its officers, and also about the potential for interference with its scanning devices from onboard electronics. Those concerns proved to be unfounded, and the change greatly streamlines the CBP's radiation inspections, without sacrificing security protections.

TAG Aviation: aircraft management has been a resounding success

TAG Aviation has become central to business aviation over the last 40 years and yet, with its finger in a whole host of pies, it is sometimes difficult to define exactly what is core to this Swiss-based business. Jo Murray speaks to Graham Williamson, President, Aircraft Management & Charter Services, TAG Aviation Europe, and finds out that TAG Aviation has been enjoying massive aircraft management success

"Aircraft management has been an outstanding success in recent years," says Williamson. "We saw significant growth, particularly of larger cabin aircraft such as Globals, Gulfstreams and Falcons. In January 2006 we managed 20 aircraft; today we have 100 in Europe and nearly 30 in Asia." He says, if anything, the recession has helped aircraft management because clients have sought dependable, reliable and secure operators.

Aircraft management – and charter – of course are core to TAG Aviation's cluster of business units, all of which feed off each other. It is easy to forget an aircraft group's origins but it is worth remembering that TAG Aviation grew out of the acquisition of an aircraft charter business – Aero Leasing – which owned its own fleet. The aircraft management segment was developed when the company elected to gradually divest of its owned fleet starting in 2003



But diversity and complementary revenue streams are also key components of TAG Aviation's success. "In the past, TAG generated most of its revenue through charter and this was supported by a core fleet of aircraft directly owned by TAG," says Williamson. "In recent years, we have reduced our dependence on charter and the associated risk during economic downturns. In the last

few years, and more importantly during the recent recession, our aircraft management business has grown enormously." This large managed fleet now provides virtually all of the company's charter capacity.

While both management and charter are core businesses, Williamson is keen to point out that all of TAG Aviation's businesses operate independently of each other. "The maintenance businesses in Geneva and Farnborough have been constant source of revenue growth and we have invested heavily to expand our capacity and range of services," he says. "Having managed aircraft complements our maintenance business but 80% of our maintenance customers are not TAG aircraft. The very successful FBO in Geneva is also complemented by our managed fleet but like TAG Geneva Engineering, most customers are third-party." What is more, many of TAG's managed aircraft are based in non TAG locations and currently TAG aircraft are based in more than 20 locations in 16 countries.

Given the impressive managed aircraft numbers, what does this mean for the



“In the past, TAG generated most of its revenue through charter and this was supported by a core fleet of aircraft directly owned by TAG” (Williamson)

collection of AOCs? “We do not collect AOCs for their own sake,” Williamson responds emphatically. “Our customers expect us to deliver whatever they require and we have a wide range of locations and client profiles.” The Swiss AOC, he explains, is only attractive to certain clients and sits outside the EU which is why a decision was taken to acquire an AOC in the UK 10 years ago. “Then about six years ago we were approached by a number of Spanish clients who wanted to come to TAG but insisted that they remained under Spanish regulation and registration; hence the Spanish AOC and an operation in Madrid.”

Now there is a sister company in Hong Kong with its own AOC and another AOC in Bahrain.

menu of services: flight operations, dispatch, airworthiness, client services, maintenance, FBOs, etc,” says Williamson. “We built our own Ground Training School three years ago to ensure we could control quality and content. This school now has more than 70 other operators as customers and, of the 2,500 crew training so far in 2011, only a quarter were from TAG,” he says.

“We never force the client to take anything; if it is in the client’s best interest to have maintenance performed by a third party, we will arrange it.”

Returning to aircraft management and Williamson describes the model employed. “We charge a management fee for what we

he says. “Another example is our partnership with Flight Safety International, who provides most of our simulator requirements; again the economies of scale allow us to pass on significant benefits to our clients.”

Another string to the TAG bow is the role the company plays in an aircraft financing. “Many of our clients’ aircraft are financed and, of course, we have a strong relationship with all of the principal lenders,” he says. “In many cases the lender will require the appointment of a legitimate operator a condition of the loan and we are privileged to be at the top of the list for many of the major lenders in the industry.”

So far, says Williamson, TAG’s maintenance, management and FBO businesses are doing well and have been strong throughout the last five years. Charter did see a significant downturn in 2009 and 2010 but 2011 has shown a sustained recovery in volume and market share. Traffic movements in Europe are 5% better than the same period in 2010. This improvement in fortunes is partly due to more capacity from managed aircraft but has also been a result of a sustained effort to attract new charter clients. “Spain and the UK have been particularly good in recent months,” says Williamson. “The strength of the Swiss Franc does have an impact on pricing for our Swiss fleet in Europe and an overall growth in capacity has made pricing much more competitive.”

To a large extent, success at TAG comes from treating each managed aircraft as unique. “We invest a great deal of time in building the crew, each one dedicated to one aircraft and customer, and we recruit with our clients to ensure they are a perfect match,” says Williamson. “Our crews play a central role in delivering our clients’ operations and are pivotal in our relationship with the owner.” As well as the crew, each client has nominated and dedicated Client Support, Account Managers, Finance Controllers and a specified Senior Manager who they can call night and day.

“Our clients do not want to talk to call centres; they want to have a small circle of trust from people who understand their unique requirements,” he concludes. ●



“Of course, once we have served the wishes of a client, it does allow us to grow these AOCs for similar customers,” says Williamson. “We have 45 UK registered aircraft, 20 Swiss, 22 Spanish, more than 20 in Asia and, of course, multiple Cayman, Bermudan, Isle of Man and US registered aircraft as well.”

Business units within a group often feed off each other and TAG Aviation is no different. Firstly there is a fabulous shop window in the shape of TAG-owned and operated Farnborough Airport. This is where maintenance customers learn about aircraft management at TAG, for example. “Our clients expect a seamless product from a

do. For this fee we will deliver, import, crew, maintain, dispatch and plan everything for the customer 24 hours a day. We are the operator so all bills and charges come to TAG and we provide the client with a single consolidated invoice every month. The client tells us where he wants to go and when; we take care of everything.”

He is also at pains to emphasise that TAG never marks up invoices and always passes through discounts to the customer. “For example, our global fuel programme is currently running at 14% below market rates. Our fleet insurance programme enjoys reduced premiums that can be 40% below market,”

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Cabin Management Systems: spoilt for choice

Connectivity has long been a popular requirement for executive aircraft, with its promise of the ability to transfer one's office to the clouds. At the same time, personal electronic devices have proliferated and created the problem of successfully integrating them in the cabin environment. Thanks to digital technology, it is now possible to replicate the "on the ground" experience in the cabin of a high-flying aeroplane. Don Parry reports

Honeywell chose this year's EBACE Show, in Geneva, to demonstrate its approach to the requirement with a full size cabin mock-up of its Ovation Select Cabin Management System (CMS) that has been chosen by Embraer for its new family of Legacy 450/500 jets. Ovation Select is a system taking the in-flight experience to the next level," says Mauricio Almeida, Vice President, Programmes - Executive Jets, at Embraer. "Its seamless connectivity and high-definition capabilities perfectly complement our Legacy 450/500 aircraft to create the optimal on-board passenger experience.

Honeywell's Ovation Select features an enhanced, intuitive interface that enables passengers to stay informed and connected with their business operations while travelling. In-flight connectivity is seamless and easy, whether travellers are connected via their BlackBerry or laptop, using their iPad, iPod or iPhone or watching a Blu-ray film. An additional, updated feature is the 3D high-definition moving map application, JetMap HD, which allows passengers to view their flight path from up to 18 different perspectives and zoom in close on the terrain below.

In addition to controlling the system's entertainment components, Ovation Select also puts lighting, seats, cabin temperature, galley and window shade controls at the passengers' fingertips.

The system is built on a 100% digital architecture and Ethernet backbone, which reduces installation time versus competing systems and facilitates the standard end-to-end self-diagnostic and troubleshooting capability. It has been tested to the current industry standard for greater



resiliency to environmental and electromagnetic effects. In addition, Ovation is virtually immune from external aircraft interference. Importantly in these fast-moving times, it allows the latest and even future technology innovations to be easily and rapidly integrated.

Rockwell Collins is another major contender in CMS technology, with its Venue system that is the industry's first high definition (HD) cabin management system and is flying on more aircraft than any other HD system. Now, a new application is available from the iTunes App Store which will transform the Apple iPhone or an iPod touch into a full, two-way remote for the Venue CMS. The free app, called CabinRemote, is available for both forward-fit and aftermarket aircraft equipped with Venue.

CabinRemote provides real-time control of all Venue audio-video systems, as well as aircraft lighting, shades and many other functions from any

location in the cabin. For aircraft equipped with a Rockwell Collins Media Centre, passengers can also display the Airshow Moving Map on their device. Use of CabinRemote requires a Wireless Access Point (WAP) and a simple software update to Venue. Once on board the aircraft, the app automatically synchronises with the Venue system, enabling all the unique and specific functions of the aircraft. For fleet operators with multiple Venue-equipped cabins, CabinRemote syncs with each cabin once the passenger boards the aircraft. Rockwell Collins' new WAP-3000 system was specifically designed to seamlessly work with CabinRemote.

Last May, Rockwell Collins announced the successful aftermarket installation of its Venue CMS on two Dornier 328DBJ aircraft. With this installation, completed by 328 Support Services of Germany (328 SSG), the Dornier 328DBJ became the first European manufactured aircraft to fly with Venue.

“The beauty of Venue is its ability to accommodate the latest technology with relative ease” (Dodson)

Earlier this year, Rockwell Collins announced an agreement with EMTEQ to fully integrate EMTEQ's line of light-emitting diode (LED) interior lighting with its Venue HD CMS. “The beauty of Venue is its ability to accommodate the latest technology with relative ease, which we're proving by integrating it with EMTEQ's lighting products,” says Tommy Dodson, Vice President and General Manager, Cabin Systems for Rockwell Collins. “EMTEQ's state-of-the-art LED lighting and its sleek look are what customers are looking for in a Venue-fitted cabin.”

Rockwell Collins has now introduced a digital HD upgrade to aircraft equipped with its ACMS and CMS-1 cabin management systems. The digital HD upgrade refreshes and extends the life of a cabin without the expense and downtime required with changing control switches and modifying the woodwork. Elements of the upgrade include HD audio/video distributor, which also can upscale analogue content to HD quality, HD monitors to provide excellent picture quality and dual Blu-ray disc player. Switzerland-based Jet Aviation was the first company to install the upgrade on a Gulfstream V. The digital HD upgrade solution is also available for Gulfstream 400 and 500 series aircraft, as well as the Hawker Beechcraft 750, 800XP, 850 and 900XP.

TrueNorth Avionics has introduced a compact Wi-Fi cabin-networking device, the TrueNorth Express+, which manages all wireless communications, IFE and cabin management devices. Using a built-in Ethernet-to-Wi-Fi link, the TrueNorth Express+ interfaces with all FCC-approved airborne wireless devices, from communications units like handsets, intercoms and smartphones, to inflight entertainment (IFE) units like DVD players, music players and game consoles, to cabin control systems for lighting and ventilation, to electronic flight bags (EFBs) in the cockpit. Incorporating built-in security for all operations, the TrueNorth Express+ creates a wireless access point for the aircraft that's RTCA DO-160 qualified and is certificated by both the FAA and EASA. The first installation was by AMAC Aerospace of Basel, Switzerland, aboard a B777 business aircraft.

Lufthansa Technik's Innovation Business Unit has now introduced

nice HD (high-definition), the new generation of its cabin management and in-flight entertainment system (CMS/IFE). The fully digital nice HD is based on a full-fledged wired and wireless high-bandwidth Ethernet network.

nice HD users are able to access all cabin, communications and entertainment devices such as a Blu-ray film on an HD display or the cabin lighting with just one wireless touch screen controller such as an iPhone, iPad or iPod touch. Wirelessly accessing the Internet, or viewing real-time images of the outside world captured by on-board cameras and displayed on any screen is possible, too.

Thanks to its open architecture, nice HD is highly configurable and flexible, allowing Lufthansa Technik to offer a wide number of cabin equipment packages, from lighting and environmental control to the integration of third-party solutions such as satellite communications and TV, portable audio/video devices or cameras. Due to a minimum of hardware components, nice HD installation is both very reliable and easy to maintain.

More importantly, nice HD meets current stringent requirements for the legal streaming of HD content with integrated Digital Rights Management (DRM) and Hollywood-approved encryption. DRM is a system for protecting the copyrights of data circulated via the Internet or other digital media by enabling secure distribution and preventing illegal use of the data. DRM and content security are essential features of a high definition IFE system, because they protect the ownership rights of content providers and meet, for example, the requirement for receiving HD audio/video on-demand content or distribut-

ing Blu-ray content within the aircraft network.

Passenger PEDs (personal electronic devices) such as smart phones or tablets can be linked to nice HD via an HDMI (High Definition Multimedia Interface) cable to feed high-definition content into the system. This makes it possible, among other things, to connect consumer media players to the system, allowing users to transmit content into the nice system.

Earlier this year, the first ever retrofit of a nice CMS/IFE system on a Bombardier Global Express aircraft was completed in cooperation with H4 Aerospace (UK) Ltd, an EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency) Design Organisation Approval (DOA). The installation was carried out during the 8C-check, which is performed on a Global Express aircraft every 10 years.

Gulfstream Aerospace has introduced the G280 Cabin Management System. This all-new Gulfstream CMS creates the optimum cabin ambience. Simple navigation gives the passenger complete control of everything from the environment to entertainment. The Gulfstream-designed system uses a familiar platform, the iPod touch, with plans to introduce other personal handheld devices. In operation, it is a simple matter of downloading the application from the Apple store and the system does the rest. Just step on board and the aircraft will automatically sync the device and provide the correct floor plan. The Gulfstream CMS was designed using Gulfstream's Cabin Essential philosophy, so functionality isn't affected by a single point of failure. No matter what, the system will continue working.

The rotary wing world is equally in need of CMS technology. In April, Flight Display Systems announced that American Eurocopter has successfully installed and delivered the first Eurocopter EC 145 with a Select Cabin Management System (Select CMS). VIP passengers can now control XM Radio, Blu-ray video, cabin lighting, air conditioning and a Flight Display Moving Map from their seats. Flight Display Systems provided four 3" VIP touchscreen control panels, Blu-ray and DVD player, flight display moving map, a 10.2" widescreen LCD with ceiling mount and 6 Genre Music Player.

The technology is available; the only drawback is that the customer is now spoiled for choice. ●



Comlux brings even heavier metal to the market



Fly Comlux, the private charter division of Comlux The Aviation Group, is celebrating a very special event: the putting into operation of a 767-200ER in VIP configuration. Jo Murray speaks to Richard Gaona, President, about the introduction of Comlux's latest addition

"Putting the 767 into service is a major event," enthuses Gaona. The aircraft will, of course, be the largest aircraft in the Comlux fleet. It will have a range of 14 hours and is being configured to carry 60 passengers in style.

The airframe itself is pre-owned and has been in the hangars at Comlux America undergoing refurbishment for a whole year. Gaona describes the resultant cabin as "an impressive arrangement" and "unique". The interior boasts an office, dining room and premium seating. "There really is nothing else like it," he says.

So who is likely to charter this aircraft with its 60 seats? Gaona responds that it is aimed at the head of state market, governments and delegations. He is planning to base the 767 VIP aircraft in Bahrain so that it can easily serve the Middle East and African markets. Comlux has applied for an AOC from the authorities in Aruba in order to create additional market opportunities for the aircraft type.

Of course Fly Comlux is no stranger to flying commercial airliner sized aircraft in VIP configuration. The company has five Airbus aircraft available for private charter. "The narrowbody market

is still very competitive," concedes Gaona, adding that there are a plethora of these aircraft types available for private charter. However, he reckons Comlux has an edge as it has a whole fleet of these aircraft types - and this is what makes the business case for operating narrowbodies, ie a whole fleet rather than an individual aircraft.

"The Airbuses are based wherever the customer is based," he explains. "There are two in the Middle East but there are also Comlux Airbuses in the CIS and Russia."

There is no denying that Fly Comlux has a penchant for large cabined aircraft. Apart from the 767 and the Airbus narrowbodies, Comlux The Aviation Group has announced a contract for the acquisition of three Legacy 650 executive jets for Fly Comlux to be based in Kazakhstan. Options for another four aircraft have also been negotiated. The total value of the deal, at list price, comes to \$90.7 million, and could reach \$211.7 million, if all options are confirmed. The first delivery is scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2011.

The rationale for this Legacy fleet is simple: there are a large number of corporations located in Kazakhstan that serve the oil and gas industry in particular, who need to be able to fly direct to the region from, say Europe, and need to be productive while they are in the air.

In addition to the 767-200ER, the five Airbuses and three Legacy 650s, the Fly Comlux fleet is also getting ready to welcome two Global 7000s which are currently on order as well as two ordered Global 6000 aircraft. A sixth Airbus will join the fleet in March 2012. There are also around 15 Bombardier aircraft and one Dassault 900LX in the Comlux stable.

But Comlux is not just fleet building. It is a diversified but compact group of businesses that serves the market as completely as possible. It is also not afraid to grow through agreements with other companies. For example, earlier this year, Comlux Middle East and Saudia Private Aviation signed an agreement to develop VIP charter markets in the Middle East.

Comlux Middle East, in the Kingdom of Bahrain, is situated close to Saudi Arabia and will make its fleet of Airbuses available for the clients of Saudia Private Aviation. Meanwhile, the Saudia Private Aviation fleet, available for charter (Falcon 7X and Hawker 400XP), is an excellent complement to the Comlux fleet.

But for now, the big splash coming from Comlux relates to the 767. And let's face it, it is not every day that a business aviation company announces it has a 767 available for private charter. ●

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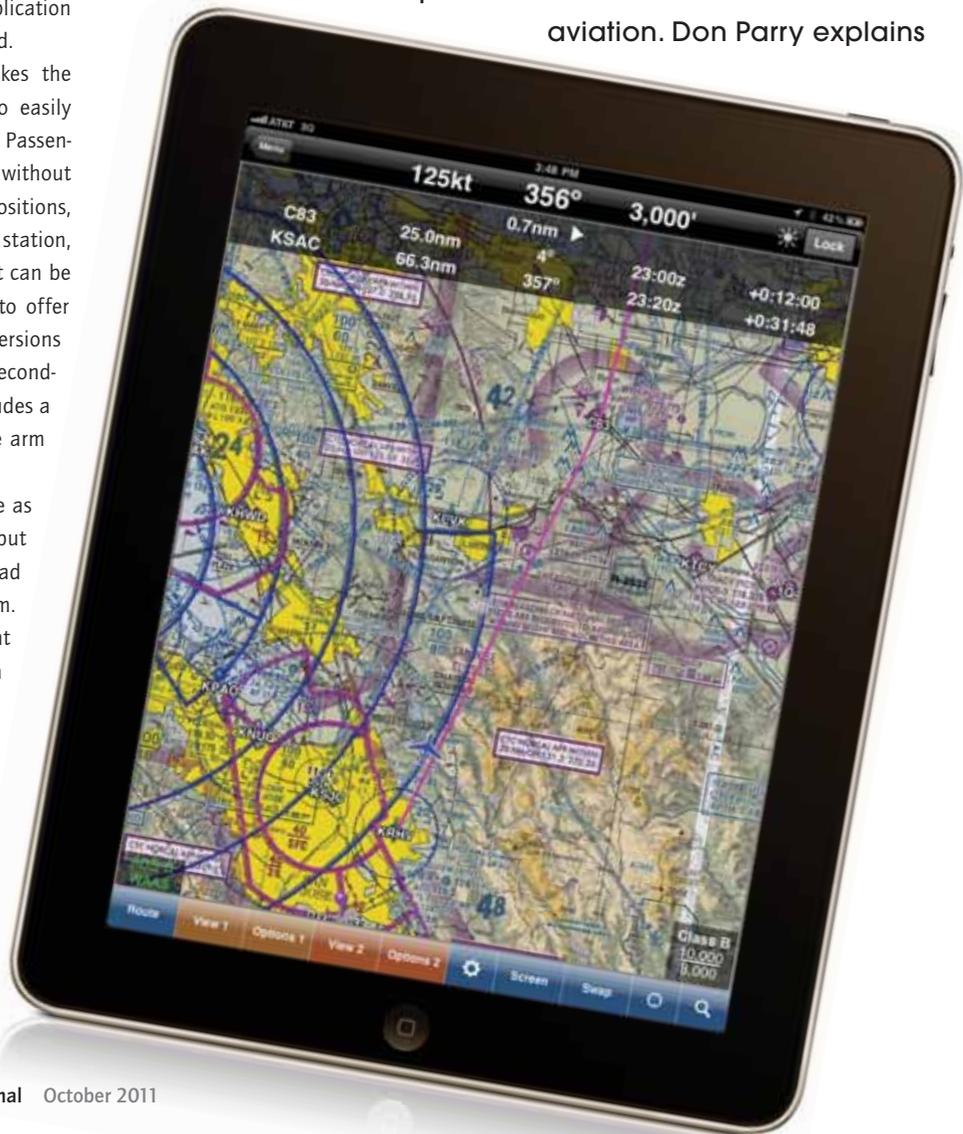
The business aircraft cabin is proving particularly attractive. Last December, Duncan Aviation integrated an iPad application for wireless control of the cabin systems in a Falcon 900, calling it the iCabin. This installation uses an iPad app, an Aircell CTR Wi-Fi source and an interface unit to communicate instructions to the Honeywell cabin management system (CMS). In operation, this application connects an iPad to an aircraft's CMS, providing passengers with a remote control for sound, video and cabin lighting. It is available for any aircraft equipped with approved Wi-Fi sources. A wireless cabin control application for Android devices is now being tested.

Flight Display Systems (FDS) makes the seductive claim that it is possible to easily upgrade an IFE system with the iPad. Passengers can watch films and play games without experiencing uncomfortable viewing positions, thanks to its arm mount or docking station, said to be the first in the industry that can be easily fitted in an optimum position to offer portrait or landscape viewing. Two versions are available to cater for the first and second-generation iPads. The mount also includes a 28V to 5V power converter within the arm of the unit, to charge the iPad.

Each configuration is also available as a version AV with the ability to output audio and video from the iPad or iPad 2 to an existing entertainment system. Once the flight is over, the entire mount assembly can be easily removed from the Base or the iPad can be removed from the mount.

Earlier this year, Innotech Aviation awarded Esoteric Inc. an order for 35 shipsets of its SkyPad wireless in-flight entertainment system (IFE) for Bombardier and Cessna business jet platforms. SkyPad was said to be the industry's first wireless IFE and cabin control system inte-

It may come as a surprise to some that many people are not sure what an Apple iPad is for. Is it a camera? Is it a computer? Is it something on a plane? The last suggestion now has a kernel of truth, as it would seem that the device is rapidly becoming an indispensable tool in several areas of civil aviation. Don Parry explains



Apps such as ForeFlight's Mobile 3HD and Hilton Software's WingX allow pilots to check weather conditions, plan flights and view aviation charts

grated with the Apple iPad and Internet. SkyPad combines audio/video compression and distribution technology with cloud computing and provides a complete system for content loading, management and playback.

Thanks to Esoteric's unique approach to wireless technology, the SkyPad system can be implemented for a fraction of the cost of traditional wired systems. In the face of the decline of CDs and DVDs, SkyPad eliminates the need to carry any physical media. The entire system is ready for cloud-based content delivery, via Ku-Band and eventually Ka-Band Internet.

It would seem that the iPad is also entering the cabin of commercial carriers. Last June, Australia's low fares airline Jetstar announced that it would conduct trials using the iPad, for onboard entertainment on domestic routes across Australia. American Airlines is also investing in portable in flight entertainment (IFE) devices, though it is using the Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1, Android platform tablet. Both airlines may be in the vanguard of a change in provision of IFE, especially as it suggests a reduction in the previous reliance on specialised and expensive avionics equipment. Might it also suggest a future commercial tussle between the proprietary operating system (OS) platform and the Android open source platform. There could be interesting times ahead. More recently, American Airlines announced the initial phase of the launch of Entertainment On Demand, an inflight streaming video product, as an innovative inflight entertainment option for customers on board its entire fleet of 15 Boeing 767-200 aircraft.

It was inevitable that the iPad should finally migrate to the flight deck of both general aviation and commercial carrier aircraft. The ball was set rolling last January when the FAA approved the use of the Apple iPad within aircraft cockpits across America. So long as the device is used as a secondary, backup resource to paper options, pilots may choose to reference the iPad for various flight needs.

Apps such as ForeFlight's Mobile 3HD and Hilton Software's WingX allow pilots to check weather conditions, plan flights and view aviation charts. By using more intuitive pinch-zoom and swiping gestures, pilots can more carefully home in on specific details they'd like to check.

Additionally, pilots can choose to load Google Earth or other satellite-based apps to view terrain at an unfamiliar airport. While 2D paper references are reliable and trustworthy, the iPad's ability to provide simulated 3D views could be a significant advancement in safety.

American Airlines became the first carrier authorised by the FAA to use iPads as Electronic Flight Bags (EFB). The company has now become the first to deploy iPads with an electronic-charting solution. Electronic charting provides pilots with a digital image of their flight route. At the time of writing, the final test phase was a prelude to FAA approval of the devices to serve as Class 1 EFB during all phases of flight.



Alaska Airlines is now issuing iPads to its pilots. The point is made that 1.5lb iPads replace up to 25lb of paper flight manuals that pilots are required to carry when they fly. This follows a successful trial by 100 line and instructor pilots and Air Line Pilots Association representatives, who evaluated the feasibility of using iPads as EFBs earlier this year. The iPads contain an app called GoodReader that is loaded with PDF versions of 41 flight, systems and performance manuals, reference cards and other materials.

Updating these reference materials can now be accomplished with one tap on the iPad screen instead of the former, labour intensive process of replacing individual pages with new ones. The iPad is considered a Class 1 electronic device, meaning it is stowed during takeoff and landing under FAA regulations. In conjunction

with replacing paper manuals, Alaska Airlines is exploring the replacement of paper aeronautical navigation charts with electronic versions on the iPad. The initiatives, dubbed "Bye, Bye, Flight Bag," will save about 2.4 million pieces of paper with the added benefit of environmental advantages. The cost of the project will be offset by lower paper demand, printing and distribution expenses and reduced fuel consumption, as some weight is removed from the aircraft.

In January, in collaboration with Navtech, appeared what was described as commercial aviation's first affordable hardware and mounting solution for Electronic Flight Bag (EFB) technology designed for the Apple iPad that includes Navtech's 31,000 page charts library. The one-click update feature automatically replaces outdated content with new versions via the Internet. Swedish cargo carrier Amapola received approval from the Swedish CAA for a Class 2B EFB and introduced the solution in its fleet of Fokker 50s.

Ultramain Systems, Inc. has developed onboard systems software, including eCabin that is a paperless cabin log and passenger information tracking software, accessible via hand-held devices such as the iPad. This innovation allows cabin crew to view passenger manifests, track cabin faults and log new faults at the touch of a button. It integrates also with Ultramaine efbTechLogs, a paperless, tech log software that wirelessly reports technical defects that speeds up rectification on arrival at a destination.

Embraer and APG (Aircraft Performance Group) recently partnered to develop an iPreFlight application for the Phenom 100 and Phenom 300 executive jets. Embraer emphasises that this is much more than a simple application. It is a complete performance package that runs through the iPad. The software uses performance data that has been certificated and approved by the regulatory authorities of Brazil (ANAC), the US (FAA) and Europe (EASA). The software for the iPad is now being expanded to include the Legacy 600 and Legacy 650.

Operators will be able to carry out crucial functions with iPreFlight, like optimising aircraft payload for each runway; calculating takeoff performance using APG's airport database of runways and obstacles; accessing information such as NOTAMs and METARs of all airports on

the route, as well as maps and charts; downloading and storing approach charts and airport diagrams and reading updated weather information.

The iPreFlight application will first be available to North American Phenom 100 and Phenom 300 customers but it will soon be offered in other regions. Embraer and APG plan to have this tool available to the entire Embraer executive jets portfolio later this year.

For the lighter GA pilot, an updated version of Cessna's flight information and planning application for the Apple iPad is now available for all single-engine aircraft manufactured by the company. Cessna iFlite 3 is an iPad app that allows pilots to instantly access up-to-the-minute weather images, plan routes and have access to dual screen moving maps. iFlite 3 also includes the ability to view Cessna Pilot Operating Handbooks, calculate aircraft weight and balance and even calculate take-off and landing performance numbers.

Other basic features of Cessna's iFlite include: performance calculations; weight and balance; route planning; weather; etc. Now, operators of Cessna Citations can perform flight planning on iPads using iPreFlight. The app features real-time METARs and winds aloft, graphical weather, routing, graphical weight & balance, a worldwide database, flight planning, Runway Analysis Max Payload Estimator (MPE) and many other features. iPreFlight will also feature takeoff and landing performance derived



from Cessna's Citation Performance Calculator (CPCalc), part of the CESNAV package. This capability will be phased in for all Citation models for which CPCalc is available.

Flight performance calculations are not performed on the iPad itself. All calculations are completed on the vendor's server, which means Internet access is required. The Internet service network can be either WiFi or 3G.

Piper Aircraft Inc. is equally active and has sponsored the launch of AirNav.com's new application for iPad, iTouch and iPhone. AirNav.com is an online service that provides updated information for aviators. In addition to the introduction and rollout, Piper is supporting the new AirNav.com iApp and its various Website Fixes, Aviation Fuel and AIRBOSS. The new app does not depict the entire AirNav database, nor replace flight-planning software but it enables very quick access to important data. The Information on the app is pulled from the AirNav Website while connected to the Internet but any search can be saved to an operator's phone for in-flight use or while out of Internet contact.

The proliferation continues. FltPlan.com has introduced a free route-mapping iPad ap-

plication, said to be the first in a series of apps exclusively for the iPad. The new app is full of features and tools for all types of flight plans. The most important feature being the ability to view flight plans over sectional, jet high, or victor low charts while offline in the air.

The iPad's built-in GPS location service can be toggled to give knots and altitude. A large blue aircraft symbol marks current position on the map. A moving-map option can also be toggled to automatically centre present position while moving. It is possible to display and update flight plans by selecting the route button on the navigation bar. Selecting a route will display it and zoom in, while dragging the route list downwards will download and update the required routes.

Certainly the iPad is versatile, lightweight, easy to stow and does not require many of the complexities of certification. At a time when the use of mobile IFE devices is becoming increasingly popular it can seem like an ideal solution, though it may also have to demonstrate a robustness to cope with constant handling by a wide range of individuals. For the flight deck it offers convenience, adaptability and enhanced operational efficiency. It would seem to be a rapidly emerging market. ●



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No standing still for Jet Aviation in the Middle East

Jet Aviation was the first company to set up an FBO in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia when it formed its Saudi-Swiss joint venture company, Jet Aviation Saudi Arabia, in 1979. The company started in Jeddah, providing ground handling and maintenance services for the private aviation industry, opening its second FBO in the Middle East in Riyadh two years later. The facilities in Jeddah and Riyadh offer FBO services, line maintenance and AOG services to private, business and military operators. The two locations each hold Saudi Arabian PCA licenses.

The Saudi operation has experienced both service expansion and capacity expansion, points out Späth. "For example, we have recently moved from the old Jeddah terminal into a new terminal, which allows us to grow further in the local market. We look to do similar things in Riyadh. Of course, we are always looking for possibilities outside these two locations where there is enough traffic to undertake some kind of handling support for our customers," he says.

The maintenance and FBO location in Dubai was established in May 2005, and the company has constantly developed its service portfolio based on customer and OEM demands. At EBACE 2011, Jet Aviation signed an agreement with Abu Dhabi Airports Company for the lease of offices at Al Bateen Executive Airport, where Jet Aviation will be Al Bateen

For more than 30 years Jet Aviation has had a vibrant Middle East presence. It has recently signed a deal to operate at Al Bateen Executive Airport, having already been in business for decades in Saudi Arabia and then Dubai. Jo Murray finds out what Jet Aviation's Middle East strategy is from Christof Späth, Senior Vice President MRO and FBO Services of Jet Aviation EMEA & Asia; Michael Rücker, Senior VP and General Manager of Jet Aviation Dubai; and Hardy Bütschi, Vice President & General Manager of Jet Aviation Saudi Arabia



Christof Späth

Executive's first independent MRO provider. Jet Aviation's service offering will include line maintenance through a newly established Jet Aviation Abu Dhabi branch office and staffing services through Jet Professionals, a subsidiary of the Jet Aviation Group. Jet Aviation has attained temporary approval to provide services at Al Bateen until the necessary trade licenses from the authorities come through.

"We are running Al Bateen as part of a Dubai operation," says Rücker. "There is a lot of potential in Abu Dhabi and our main goal is to support grounded aircraft." Späth adds that Jet Aviation was attracted to Abu Dhabi by the dedicated VIP and business aviation airport concept, but states that Jet Aviation's regional Middle East strategy is essentially built on leadership provided by the Dubai operation. "Throughout the region there is a common customer base for which we offer



Michael Rücker

common services," he says, commenting on the rationale for this.

To date, Jet Aviation Dubai is an authorised service centre for maintenance and warranty support to Boeing BBJ, the Gulfstream GIV and GV series, the Dassault Falcon 900, 2000 and 7X series, the Hawker Beechcraft jets series and Embraer Legacy aircraft, including L4 inspections. The missing Bombardier capability to support CL604, CL605 and GLEX in Jet Aviation's Middle East portfolio will be added at the new Al Bateen facility by next Summer. Al Bateen will also likely see maintenance capability for light interior repairs, and the Airbus ACJ is on the radar in terms of providing support.

Jet Aviation points out that the Dubai operation has experienced a substantial increase in base maintenance Certificates of Return to Service (CRS) issued for Embraer Legacy aircraft. With the largest Embraer Legacy customer base in the Middle East, Jet Aviation Dubai has issued markedly more Embraer Legacy CRSs to date this year than last. High-end products like the Falcon 7X, the G450/550 and, in the future, the G650 are also entering the Middle East region in substantial numbers. Jet Aviation Dubai is expected to support a fleet of up to five Falcon 7Xs by the

end of 2011 and three Falcon 7Xs are already operating in India and the UAE.

Späth notes that putting aircraft support in place for the future Middle East aircraft fleet requires copious data gathering. "All of the information that we receive helps us to determine delivery rates and we are also working on a monthly record of movements. We make calculations with this information to predict maintenance requirements and movements. It might not be perfect, but it gives us a good indication of how much traffic and handling will be required of our FBOs."

Späth also points out that Jet Aviation always makes investments based on long-term prospects and in-depth conversations with the OEMs. "You need to invest where nothing already exists, which is a very tough decision," he says. "We might make a decision based on an existing fleet, should we see enough business of certain aircraft types. We are looking for critical volume to ensure that our investment in training and tooling pays off."

Building connections with customers so that Jet Aviation can fully serve them wherever and whatever they fly is the key. "Long-term relationships mean a lot to us and we honour the trust and open communication on which they are built," Späth says. He adds that both Bütschi in Saudi and Rücker in Dubai offer clients a "one roof solution." Although the Dubai operation is more developed than Saudi's, both operations benefit by sharing facilities."

Of course Jet Aviation's Middle East operations also feed into the company's VIP completions business in Europe. In fact the first aircraft completed for a Middle Eastern client was a 757-200 in 1997. Jet Aviation has since outfitted an additional 17 wide-body and narrow-body aircraft for both Boeing and Airbus aircraft types for a range of prestigious VVIP clients in the Middle Eastern region. In addition, Jet Aviation has completed 10 major refurbishment projects for Middle Eastern clients, as well as numerous smaller refurbishments across a variety of aircraft types. Four of Jet Aviation's current completions and major refurbishment projects are for this important client base, which is complemented by an equally strong client base in other regions, notably Russia and

Eastern Europe.

Both within and beyond the Middle East, Jet Aviation is always looking for growth opportunities and business synergies. Perhaps the Indian market beckons. Whether growth will be alone or through partnerships – as in Saudi – will be dictated by market circumstances.

Späth says: "Where possible, we prefer to fully own an operation, but if we are compelled to have a partner, it can help to have a strong partner with whom we can grow faster. There is also a risk-sharing aspect which may come into play."

In whichever way Jet Aviation enters a new market, one thing is sure: it remains a full-service global aviation company offering maintenance, FBO, aircraft management and charter services to meet the needs of its customers, whatever they may be. Each line of business provides legitimate and necessary service offerings – they are not shop fronts for more intensive operations, such as completions and heavy maintenance. But the synergies between regional operations in the Middle East – as well as globally – are compelling. There is nothing ad hoc about Jet Aviation's business strategy in any region – and especially not in the Middle East. ●



Hardy N. Bütschi

The return of refurbishment

Flying Colours Corp, the Canadian based service company which specialises in interior completions on new and pre-owned business aircraft, is making some very positive noises about market recovery. Its refurbishment business is settling into a good pattern of strong orders and busy hangars with mid-sized business jets leading the way. Jo Murray speaks to Sean Gillespie, Director, Completion Sales & Management



“This year has been steady. The market has come back strongly and we’re getting a lot of new US customers as well as continuing to develop our Canadian customers,” points out Gillespie. Some of them are repeat clients who have been holding off and some are simply new ones. These refurbishments feed the business while we continue to undertake larger projects.”

Of course Flying Colours Corp has a number of sides of the completions business. On one side is the green Challenger 850, another on the CRJ Execliner conversion programme (the larger projects) and on the other is the refurbishments of mid-large sized aircraft of which Gillespie is speaking.

So why is the market recovering at this point? Gillespie responds that there is definitely pent up demand that just cannot wait any longer. He adds that some clients have simply not been able to bear the cost of refurbishment until now. “The other reason is that it is still a good time to buy an airplane and aircraft owners want to put their own touch on them. That is where we come in from the service point of view,” he says.

“Prices are slowly starting to creep up for used aircraft,” he says. “But they are still pretty good value.”

So who are these clients that are now coming to the fore? Gillespie says they are a mix of both private individuals and corporate clients with some of them looking to put these aircraft into private charter use. There is really no typical client. By the same token, there is no typical refurbishment project: some are very streamlined and fairly simple in terms of the cabin technology; while others incorporate a whole menu of offerings including stone floors, exotic woods and a full range of communications technology.

One thing is clear though: the opportunists have disappeared and aircraft buyers who are seeking refurbishments have solid financing in place, albeit that that is difficult to come by.

Refurbishments aside, Gillespie says that conversions are also coming back strongly. There are a couple of conversions booked in at Flying Colours Corp for the Autumn of 2011. He says the 850 is still a good price and a 20,000 hour airframe is still the optimum point at which a conversion takes place – some criteria just do not change despite the recession.

In fact, Flying Colours Corp has had a tolerable recession with no layoffs and no cuts. It is even looking to expand internationally with Russia and Asia being prime locations for the next steps. “We have to follow our client base,” says Gillespie. We have to support them.” He is aware that the Indian and Chinese markets are going to be strong and there is very little there to support them at present. Of course partnerships are the usual route into new markets like these and are potentially on Flying Colours Corp’s radar. “A joint venture with an established company could be mutually beneficial,” says Gillespie.

For now, he is delighted with the increased demand for mid-size business jet refurbishments with particular demand focused on the Challenger 300, Challenger 604, Falcon 900, Hawker 800, and Global models.

“We are currently working on a total of ten mid-size jet projects and our backlog is starting to build with another four complete projects in the pipeline,” says Gillespie. “Our customer base is truly global but the major spikes in these refurbishments have come from existing or new North American customers.” This is the kind of good news the market most definitely needs to hear. ●



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On course

Ocean Sky was an ambitious private charter venture when it was launched in the boom years when a huge market presence, charismatic leadership and large fleet orders typified the private charter and services market. The lean years have changed all that and the winners in the new era for private charter and services look quite different. With Stephen Grimes now at the helm, Ocean Sky has been adapting to the new climate for operating in the business aviation market and is emerging as a very different – and profitable – proposition. Jo Murray speaks to CEO Grimes

“The year 2011 has been better than 2010, and 2010 was better than 2009,” states Grimes emphatically. “But the journey is only half complete.” He is talking of the work he is carrying out at Ocean Sky to ensure it is future-facing and properly positioned to deliver as a significant business aviation empire based in Europe. This is exactly what Ocean Sky’s shareholders required of Grimes when they installed him at the top of their business. The idea was to turn this fleet-owning private jet company into a group to rival the likes of Jet Aviation and Tag Aviation.

Perhaps the first task was to divest Ocean Sky of all the aircraft it bought at the top of the market. Only then could Grimes set about his business of building an all-encompassing business aviation services company – that one-stop shop Ocean Sky has morphed into.

“People need the ability to buy aircraft and to sell aircraft – we can help them to do that,” he says. “They need people to manage aircraft for them and provide crew, maintenance, handling and fuel – we can do that.” Then there is the need for the facilitation of aircraft charter for managed aircraft – that is another string to Ocean Sky’s bow. Next there is aircraft maintenance which Ocean Sky offers through two service centres at Manchester and London Luton in the UK, on a wide range of modern

business jet types. Aircraft interiors are also on offer. Finally, there is the fifth piece of the jigsaw: handling. This is provided at three FBOs in the UK (Manchester, London Luton and Prestwick in Scotland) as well as three on continental Europe (Ibiza, Mahon and Valencia). FBO services include: refuelling, light maintenance, parking and hangarage

Of course repositioning this operation from a boom-led aircraft buying operation into a services group employing 350 staff with £100 million in turnover takes expertise and Grimes has not been slow at putting in place a team to pull this off. Initially, Andrew Hughes was brought in to oversee Ocean Sky Aircraft Management and Kerry Besgrove to head up the FBO division, followed by Natalie Raper who was Marketing Director for Luton Airport. Key to the future financial stability was the arrival of Gemma Curtis as Chief Financial Officer in March 2010. A great deal of work was needed to put sound financial process and procedures in place. Subsequently, Samantha Clouder was appointed Sales and Business Development Director for Ocean Sky Aircraft Charter after nine years at NetJets. More recently, Janus Kamradt has been hired to lead sales activities for the group’s newly established aircraft sales operation and its aircraft management business and Chris Sugden has been recruited to manage the expanding engineering operations at Lon-

don Luton Airport which has recently been approved as a Bombardier authorised service centre. “We have brought in experts who know their business,” comments Grimes.

Perhaps pivotal to the new way of thinking at Ocean Sky is that no aircraft will appear on its balance sheet. “There is no risk in not owning aircraft,” says Grimes emphatically. “There is less risk in the business and no financial risk.” He adds: “And we only want to manage aircraft we understand like the Global Express, the Challenger, The Gulfstream 550, The Falcon 7X and the Falcon 900.”

Originally, Grimes was brought into Ocean Sky to run the maintenance and FBO sides of the business – specifically London Luton. “The FBO business is a sound business and, with the right formula, you can make money,” says Grimes. “But you have got to get the service and the people right, and you have to be transparent.”

He continues: “It is our desire to have a chain of FBOs from Ireland eastwards.” When he says “eastwards”, he means to Kazakhstan (interesting because of Ocean Sky’s traditional links with Russian charter services) all the way to India and China. For aircraft maintenance, Ocean Sky will most likely expand into continental Europe and take its two maintenance centres up to a total of four. “Maintenance is a steady business but with low margins,” he comments. “But we will cross feed between different parts of the business.”

The Middle East is also on Grimes’ radar and although there is a sales office in Dubai, he concedes that Dubai is in the doldrums, albeit that Abu Dhabi is picking up.

Having its own FBOs and maintenance facilities means that aircraft managed by Ocean Sky are looked after in a highly secure and private manner. “All work is in-house and very discreet. This is what our managed aircraft customers want,” says Grimes.

What is interesting about Ocean Sky is that it is developing a business model under which its competitors are also its customers – largely on the handling front. It is becoming a vibrant, high quality services company that only takes on business that makes sense for the group.

“We sell very high quality and very safe services,” says Grimes. “Why would we want to own aircraft?” ●

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A new model is emerging for buying private charter. It is informed, transparent, market-driven and technology-enabled. We have seen a number of platforms emerge – from airlines, pilots, air taxi operators and others – to assist with the procurement of private charter and address the empty leg conundrum; but now a technology entrepreneur has entered the arena who has personal experience, a full IT toolkit and the wisdom to put Victor at the centre of charter buying. Jo Murray met Clive Jackson, founder and Chief Executive Officer of Victor

Remember those halcyon days for private jet travel when the privileged and elite simply called their broker, accepted their advice, jumped on board and paid a bill? Since then, charter companies have striven to unbundle their billing, been at pains to demonstrate their airworthiness and made efforts to make available both their documentation and their fleets for inspection. But one cannot help but wonder whether the charter buyer is still a little in the dark.

This is a surprising phenomenon since in all other areas of our lives the market is taking a lead over suppliers. Now the community approach to buying and selling is filtering upwards, and Victor is a prime example.

Victor is what Jackson calls a “private jet-share community”. At its heart lies a simple to use and highly visual website, which hides a whole host of programming and algorithms that deliver what the charter buyer is looking for at the price he or she is willing to pay. Victor acts as the pivot between its members – a community of charter buyers and, crucially, seat buyers – and its partners – a host of charter companies who sign up to Victor’s terms and conditions to deliver consistency of supply.

The members are much like Jackson himself – buyers of air travel who are regularly let down by the airline community, are willing to pay to travel privately but are turned off by the upfront costs associated with outright aircraft purchase, leasing, fractional shares and jet cards. This leaves them buying flights from the charter market with all its diversity and complexity. And this is what prompted this highly successful technology entrepreneur to launch Victor in order to deliver a price comparison, booking and (importantly) payment platform to enable charter buyers to charter private jets on any route at any time at a cost they can happily bear and within an airframe that meets their expectations. “I came at Victor



from the consumer perspective. I took the hope out of procurement,” comments Jackson.

The really clever bit comes from the ability the charter buyer is delivered (if desired) to sell surplus seats – on flights booked by him or her – to other Victor members. Thus, the cost of whole jet charter is dramatically reduced as more members buy seats and whole aircraft charter pricing is spread between more parties. In essence, demand is aggregated through Victor – not just in terms of definitive decisions to buy seats but also in terms of registering a desire to buy a seat on a specific flight at a certain price point. The market is now truly dictating the terms of procurement. Of course none of this detracts from the ability to procure whole aircraft charter – that is the simplest form of procurement through Victor.

Although this is all price-oriented, Victor is not a tool to beat the profitability out of private charter supplier – it is simply opening up the market to air travellers who might otherwise have sat on the tarmac for hours, waiting for an airliner to take off. Whole aircraft charter pricing is set by the charter company at a level with which it is comfortable. The value comes from marketing and filling more seats on that flight if desired. Partner operators should win through the use of Victor too – their revenues are set to shift upwards as their fleets enter a phase of higher utilisation.

Jackson is no newcomer to this way of think-

ing. He pioneered digital marketing with the establishment of Global Beach in 1993 and then cured the automotive industry of its inventory woes through the launch of autotorq.com. Despite his previous success, Jackson has entered the private jet fray gently through a soft launch in March and full market entry in August 2011. To date, 335 members have already signed up. About one-third of these members were already flying privately, but they wanted to buy their charter flights through a more effective and transparent model. The other two-thirds are coming over from the airline community. Importantly, there is no membership fee.

The private jet fleet to which members have access through the partnership network currently comprises about 130 aircraft but that is rapidly headed towards 200 by the end of September. A 5% flat fee is charged on each transaction, and Victor will rebate 70% of all seat sale revenue to the original charterer, only delivering a return for Victor investment if it generates seat sales.

The aim is for the membership to leap up to 1,500 within 12 months. Jackson points out that Victor is doubling the rate of bookings every 90 days and there is a very high closure rate on quotes. In addition, if Victor senses a high demand for flights to accommodate a certain route on a specific date, Victor itself will put a chartered aircraft on standby which will shift to confirmed status once the demand reaches a critical level. By the fourth quarter of 2011, Victor will have a German operation in place. Next will come a North American operation and China and India are sure to follow.

What is delightful about Victor is not just that it is a new concept in a market sector that needs new ideas; it is that it will drive traffic. We all know that more charter hours mean more aircraft available for private charter – either through aircraft management contracts or through fleet procurement – and this means brighter prospects for manufacturing. ●



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