HoneywellDodges a Bullet

Honeywell rocked the show yesterday, announcing that it’s spinning off its home products, ADI global distribution, and transportation systems business units, which collectively generate $7.5 billion in annual sales. The divestiture will help the corporation fund future acquisitions and allow it to focus on such core businesses as engines and avionics. —Page 12

Pilatus Brings PC-24

Pilatus has returned to her roots. The PC-24, which lists for $4.8 million, is a “catalyst engine,” said Wayne Kale, corporate vice president of sales and marketing. The PC-24 secured its first contract last November — a $10 million order from the U.S. Air Force and Air National Guard. —Page 36

Comlux for First BBJ MAX

The first BBJ MAX would be a “billion-dollar business,” said Textron Aviation President and CEO Scott Ernest. Textron has also delivered the first fully configured Hawker 400XPR jet. —Page 53

New aerospace president has returned to her roots.

Lord’s Becky Williams mull over their futures.

Wheels Up Success

Display reflects certification confidence.

Read all about it! Eight FBO chains mull over their futures.

FBO Consolidation – Not All transport aircraft.

Avionics supplier is branching into aero – engines and avionics.

Garmin Goes Part 25

Pilatus Brings PC-24

John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; and Ron Ruocco of Hertz. Phillips 66; Jeff Michael of NCR; and Ron Ruocco of Hertz. Phillips 66; Jeff Michael of NCR; and Ron Ruocco of Hertz. Phillips 66; Jeff Michael of NCR; and Ron Ruocco of Hertz. Phillips 66; Jeff Michael of NCR; and Ron Ruocco of Hertz. Phillips 66; Jeff Michael of NCR; and Ron Ruocco of Hertz. Phillips 66; Jeff Michael of NCR; and Ron Ruocco of Hertz.

Celebrating the latest Corporate Angel Network donation here yesterday were (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, aviation managing director; Lindsey Grant and Eric McMurphy of Executive Director Gina Russo; Penton Aviation’s Frank Craven, business editor of Aviation Week’s (from left) John Mastrocinque of Hertz; Frank Krafka of NCR; William Garvey, av
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—Page 12

An Informa Company

Textron Aviation’s senior sales VP for Cessna Rob Scholl (far left) and colleagues celebrated the impending delivery of the manufacturer’s 100th Cessna Citation Latitude business jet at the show yesterday. The delivery, which will be made to NetJets, comes 26 months after the first Latitude entered service. The midsize jet, which lists for $16.35 million, now represents “a billion-dollar business,” said Textron Aviation President and CEO Scott Ernest. Textron has also delivered the first fully configured Hawker 400XPR jet.

—Page 53
Celebrating a Century of Latitude Deliveries

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American Aero Donates to SEAL Scholarships

American Aero FTW, an FBO at Meacham International Airport in Fort Worth, helped launch a new scholarship program with the Navy SEAL Foundation with a $22,000 donation to support pilot training for former SEALs. The check was presented on the first day of the NBAA show in Las Vegas.

The Navy SEAL Foundation provides immediate and ongoing support to the Naval Special Warfare community and its families. The new scholarship program will help fill a gap in funding from the GI Bill by covering pilot training.

This marks the FBO’s fifth annual contribution to the Foundation, for a total donation of more than $83,000. Funding comes from the American Aero FTW “Red, White and Blue” program, which enables customers to contribute 10 cents from every gallon of fuel purchased. The FBO matches those donations dollar for dollar. Foundation CEO Robin King said there is considerable interest in pilot education among Foundation clientele. “This scholarship is a great way to support former SEALs as they transition out of the military and into new career opportunities,” King said. “Navy SEALs are the best that this country has to offer, and we are grateful for companies like American Aero FTW and its customers for aligning themselves with our mission.”

American Aero FTW President, Aviation Week
Gregory Hamilton

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Safran Mulls Silvercrest Fix Options

Despite Dassault hinting that the latest problems may force it to consider an alternative engine, Safran says it is striving to minimize further delays and insists the baseline architecture of the Silvercrest is sound. However, according to Safran commercial engines VP Cedric Goubet, the length of the delay will depend on which particular set of fixes is selected, and he adds that the revised schedule will be known well before the end of the year.

“The Silvercrest is an all-new engine, but with proven technologies, and is aimed at reaching performance levels that are unrivaled for this market segment. However, it’s been a challenge — and, truth be told, more challenging than we thought initially,” says Goubet. The unexpected problems cropped up in September during flight tests of the latest configuration of the Silvercrest incorporating improvements destined for the service-entry standard on the -5X.

“We had made a lot of progress, and solutions to most of our previous difficulties were validated and verified during the tests of this new configuration. But then this issue appeared, and clearly it was very disappointing,” says Goubet.

During tests on the company’s Gulfstream II flying testbed, the high-pressure compressor (HPC) suffered acceleration, deceleration and stall issues at high-altitude and low-speed conditions. The GII is capable of flying at 45,000 ft. and was investigating the potential for additional efficiency gains when the problems hit.

Unusually for an engine in the 11,000-lb.-plus thrust range, the compressor combines a four-stage axial unit with a single centrifugal stage. “The issue is with the axial part, not the centrifugal,” confirms Goubet, who adds the “problem has nothing to do with the overall architecture of the compressor.”

“We have to optimize the settings of the compressor and maybe introduce some modifications to really recover all the [surge] margin we need to operate as expected across the flight envelope,” he says. “However, we have enough knowledge to know it is unlikely that it will be sufficient to only optimize the settings, the control laws and positioning of the VSV [variable stator vanes]. That will help to achieve a portion [of the losses] but not all the way. We may look at some flowpath modifications, but we want to minimize that and we will not add stages or vanes,” Goubet says.

The engine, meanwhile, continues to fly a restricted flight envelope on the GII, and data continues to help guide Safran’s engineering team as to the best solution. The engine can also continue to be used in its current configuration for several certification tests, says Safran.

Striving to strike a balance, Goubet says the latest flight-test discovery “is bad, but it is not a catastrophe. There is no doubt in our confidence to achieve what we set out to do with this engine. Despite this issue, we remain confident in the progress we have made with this engine over the past two years and the fact we will get there with a competitive engine in this market segment.”

—Guy Norris

The Silvercrest is an all-new engine, but with proven technologies, and is aimed at reaching performance levels that are unrivaled for this market segment. However, it’s been a challenge — and, truth be told, more challenging than we thought initially.”

—Cedric Goubet, commercial engines VP, Safran

A year ago, Safran Aircraft Engines CEO Olivier Andriés visited NBAA to assure the world that the Silvercrest problems would be solved. “I can say today that the issues are behind us,” he said.
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Impact of Falcon 5X Woes Uncertain

Dassault officials declined to comment further on their disappointment with Safran’s bombshell admission that the 11,450-lb.-thrust Silvercrest turbofan, which is to power the Falcon 5X, is suffering yet another round of development woes. Safran’s problems again have delayed the Falcon 5X’s entry into service, now slated for after 2020, some four years late.

Eric Trappier, Dassault chairman and CEO, was clearly surprised by Safran’s disclosure of the Silvercrest’s high-pressure compressor problems just before NBAA. Company officials say Dassault needs time to evaluate the impact of these latest problems. Safran needs to finalize proposed changes to Silvercrest before Dassault can establish firm Falcon 5X development and flight-test schedules.

Trappier had planned to announce Dassault’s next business jet by the end of 2017, but the new large-cabin aircraft has been put on back burner while Dassault engineers focus on the Falcon 5X.

The company had been counting on the Falcon 5X to jump-start its civil aircraft sales, which have been declining since 2013. Last year, it reported 49 aircraft deliveries, according to GAMA. At the Paris Air Show, Trappier said that 2017 would be another tough year, with about 45 deliveries. But he expects gradual improvement in 2018.

Historically, Dassault has offset drops in civil aircraft deliveries with sales of its military aircraft. In 2015, for instance, Dassault reported robust export sales of $87 million to $93 million for its Mach 2 class Rafale strike fighter. Trappier says that Dassault’s total civil and military revenues for 2017 should top $4 billion, thanks to the resurgence of Rafale exports.

Dassault (Booth N6014 and Static Display 19) is one of the very few aircraft manufacturers that has a broad range of civil and military products that can help it weather major economic storms, such as the severe turbulence being generated in Villaroche.

—Fred George

Silvercrest Issues Raise the Ghosts of Engine SMS

THE SPECTER OF new problems with Safran’s Silvercrest mid-thrust powerplant amid hints from Dassault that it may consider alternative engines has revived speculation that other manufacturers may rush back in to fill the power gap for midsize and super-midsize business jets.

But how real is this scenario? A decade ago there was frantic development activity in this arena, then loosely dubbed the 10K (10,000 lb.) thrust class, with Honeywell, General Electric, Rolls-Royce, Pratt & Whitney Canada and Safran (then Snecma) all in the race. In 2007, Rolls-Royce’s RB.282 two-shaft turbofan had been selected by Dassault for the super-midsize (SMS) business jet that would later evolve into today’s Falcon 5X, and the other engine makers were hunting for business on emerging midsize projects such as Cessna’s Columbus.

Fast-forward to 2017, and Dassault is now looking at a potential entry-into-service beyond 2020 as Safran rushes to fix surge margin issues with the Silvercrest compressor. Rolls, which dropped out of the SMS market after Dassault grew the -5X, is still years away from being able to compete as it focuses on development of the new Advance2 family covering the 10,000- to 20,000-lb.-thrust range. General Electric’s Passport engine, originally the TechX, was launched in 2010 for Bombardier’s Global 7000/8000 and, according to company sources, is unlikely to form the basis for an assault on the midsize market anytime soon.

Honeywell, meantime, looks like a stronger contender, with growing signs that it is preparing to finally expand into the higher-thrust market with a development of its long-anticipated HTF10000. The study engine, which has constantly been refreshed since it was first offered for the Dassault project, is based heavily on the successful HTF7000 family and, if launched, will likely feature a revised core and a larger, two-stage fan.

Pratt & Whitney Canada may be moving into pole position, having long since launched the PW800 family covering the 10,000- to 20,000-lb.-thrust range. Officially launched in 2014 for the Gulfstream G500/600 family, the first variant is based on the core of the PW1500G geared turbofan. However, the company continues to harbor ambitions in the midsize arena, having originally developed the PW810 for the Cessna Columbus, which was axed in 2009. A new, small variant, believed to be based on the PW1200G core and dubbed the PW812, is widely thought to be in the works as the lead engine candidate for a large-cabin Gulfstream project called the G400NG.

Pratt declines to comment on speculation over additional PW800 family members but says “we have engines across all thrust classes; some exist like the PW814/815 and some need to be developed, as we are always looking for ways to grow our marketplace if there is an opportunity. But the truth is today we don’t have the engine that fits into the -5X,” says Pratt & Whitney Canada president John Saabas.

—Guy Norris
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Comlux Signs First-Ever BBJ MAX 8 Completion

Business is brisk at Comlux, the Swiss-based VIP aircraft management, operating and charter company that also has a U.S. completions and maintenance center in Indianapolis.

A raft of news from Comlux includes the first-ever completion of a VIP BBJ MAX 8, signing up customers for two of its ACJ320neo, the addition of an Embraer Lineage and a VVIP Boeing 777 to its charter fleet, and plans for a service center in Europe.

“We are very busy,” says Comlux Group Chairman Richard Gaona. Comlux had the foresight to buy three Airbus ACJ320neo and two Boeing BBJ MAX aircraft for “green” delivery next year and in 2019, two to three years ahead of the next available delivery slots from the manufacturers. Its plan to sell them to those who can’t wait, complete them in Indianapolis and hopefully operate them as well is paying off.

Comlux Completion has been awarded the cabin outfitting contract of the first BBJ MAX 8 aircraft, for an undisclosed customer. The aircraft will arrive at Comlux’s Indianapolis facilities in the fourth quarter of 2018, for redelivery by fall 2019. “The first MAX 8 signature together with the ACJ320neo cabin contract signed in August is paving the way for establishing Comlux as a leader in the VIP completions market,” says Scott Meyer, CEO, Comlux Completion. The projects were won in the face of an oversupplied market that has seen the closure of four completions businesses over the past three years. But Comlux anticipated the market conditions, adjusted accordingly and has invested in new technologies and capabilities to make it more competitive, says Gaona.

He noted that buying three ACJ320s and two BBJ MAXs was a very risky move and there was no guarantee that Comlux would win the completions. Now he’s hoping to operate the aircraft too. “I have still one completions slot to offer, in maybe 2019,” says Gaona. Comlux, he added, is juggling slots and delivery of one of the BBJs in order to remain at full capacity and deliver to customers on time.

In other news, Gaona notes that Comlux (Booth N5704) is considering a VIP maintenance center in Europe that will handle A to C checks as well as install a new Comlux:developed Forward Auxiliary Center Tank System for the Airbus A321. The new system will allow VIP operators to realize a range increase of up to 500 nm (25 Pax), while commercial operators can expect up to 300 nm (160 Pax).

Comlux to Operate Lineage for Global Jet

Global Jet Capital, a leading provider of corporate aircraft financing solutions with a portfolio of $2.5 billion, has selected Comlux to operate an Embraer Lineage 1000 in Europe on its behalf. The aircraft, which is on show here in the static display, was recently returned to Global Jet from lease. It is certified for 19 seats and sleeps 11 people comfortably. It features a very spacious welcome lounge with a forward galley and separate seating zones for groups, plus a separated master bedroom and master bathroom at the rear.

“With its brand-new paint, a partial refurbishment and updated maintenance, the Lineage 1000 is in a great position to launch into the European charter market,” says Comlux Group Chairman Richard Gaona. It will be based at London Stansted Airport.

The aircraft will be available for charter or wet lease, or for sale.

Global Jet earlier this year launched an asset management division to utilize aircraft that are returned from lease until they are sold or leased out again.

Gaona said selection of Comlux by such a large lessor is an accolade, and he hopes it could lead to more business from Global Jet’s portfolio.
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Swiss Timing for Pilatus PC-24 Program

With Pilatus Aircraft on the verge of clinching certification of the PC-24 light jet, the Swiss-based manufacturer is so confident of completing the final few hours of testing on schedule that it has trundled the second prototype into the show floor here at NBAA.

“We are at the very end of the development program, and this week we have the last review by EASA. From there on in we are into the final phase of certification,” says Pilatus CEO Markus Bucher. “We always said we would certify the PC-24 in 2017, and, obviously, depending on the good will and hard work of EASA – supported by the FAA – we will achieve that goal this year.

“The first of 84 aircraft on firm order is also undergoing systems integration work at the company’s Stans facility in Switzerland, from where it will be delivered by year-end to Portsmouth, New Hampshire-based fractional provider PlaneSense. “A hell of a lot has been achieved over the past two years,” says Bucher, who adds that certification and initial deliveries will begin after completion of a six-week, 150-flight-hour, functional and reliability program to be flown by the third prototype, P03.

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CAE Trains Flexjet Flyers: Six More Years

CAE business aviation training GM Nelson Camacho, Flexjet COO David Davies and CAE business aviation training VP Camille Mariamo celebrated the extended instruction pact here yesterday.

“We have achieved more than 2,000 flight hours, and there are just a couple hundred to go,” says Bucher. The first prototype, P01, which has completed almost 900 flight hours over 626 flights, is already being used for post-certification work such as development of new customer options including new inflight entertainment systems.

In the meantime, Pilatus is still keeping the order book closed while preparations continue to ramp up PC-24 production through the end of this year and 2018. “We want to make sure we can start delivery of customer aircraft before we reopen the order book. You will hear from us in 2018 when that will happen,” says Bucher.

—Guy Norris

CAE Trains Flexjet Flyers: Six More Years

CAE said here yesterday that it’s renewed a long-term contract to train Flexjet and Flight Options, providing “exclusive pilot training programs for an additional six years, covering multiple business aircraft platforms, including Bombardier, Cessna, Gulfstream, Nextant Aerospace and Embraer.”

“CAE has been an outstanding partner over the years, providing high-quality training and delivering a superior customer experience to all of our pilots,” said Joe Salata, senior VP of flight operations at Flexjet and Flight Options.

“Continuing our relationship with CAE was an easy choice. We are confident that our flight crews will continue to experience world-class training.”

“We are delighted that Flexjet and Flight Options have selected CAE as its training partner of choice once again and we look forward to our continued collaboration long into the future,” said Nick Leontidis, CAE group president for civil aviation training solutions, citing “pilot training programs multiple business aviation aircraft platforms.”

Training will continue to be conducted at CAE’s training centers in Dallas and Morristown, New Jersey. CAE has been Flexjet and Flight Options’ training partner of choice for more than 14 years. Booth C10610.
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Honeywell Aero Dodges Spinoff Bullet

HONEYWELL SAID YESTERDAY that it’s spinning off its home products, ADI global distribution and transportation systems business units, which collectively generate $7.5 billion in annual revenues. Divesting the units will help Honeywell fund future acquisitions and allow it to focus on core businesses, such as its aerospace unit, which accounts for 36% of revenues. The transactions are slated to be tax-free to shareholders for U.S. federal income tax reporting and to be completed by the end of 2018.

Activist investor Third Point Capital, a New York-based hedge fund, had been pushing Honeywell to divest its aerospace business unit since April as a means of increasing share value. But Third Point officials say they’re pleased by the announcement, according to news reports.

“Our aerospace division strongly meets the criteria we look for in a Honeywell business: great position in a growing industry, increasing importance of technology - particularly software and connectivity - global scale and more. Honeywell has and will constantly evaluate the company’s entire portfolio, but again, Aerospace is not affected by today’s announcement,” says Honeywell CEO Darius Adamczyk.

While Wall Street analysts see the divestures as positive moves on the part of Adamczyk, many believe that Honeywell needs further to winnow out its holdings. Some outsiders say that its aerospace division, with a broad range of products including engines, avionics and cabin systems, may need to merge with another firm to gain the critical mass. Others have suggested Honeywell may have to bolt on more businesses to Aerospace, especially as consolidation rolls across the Western A&D industry. To that effect, Adamczyk said the slimmed-down Honeywell will be able to pursue M&A accordingly.

But for now, it’s business as usual at Honeywell Aerospace. “We’re concentrating on staying focused. It’s great to be Honeywell,” says Brian Sill, president of the engines and power systems business unit. The spinoffs should be complete by 2018.

Adamczyk said Honeywell is eyeing significant growth for Aerospace that is not tied to platforms and traditional manufacturing cycles - namely, he said, building on already double-digit business growth in connected-aircraft offerings and in retrofit, modification and upgrade (RMU) services.

The results of the latest business portfolio review, and keeping Aerospace, confirm Honeywell’s happiness with how Aerospace is performing now, he said. Honeywell is at Booth N5100. —Fred George

Wheels Up: Business Aviation Success Story

Wheels Up, a membership-based private aircraft company, says a new round of funding it recently secured will help it grow more quickly and acquire aircraft faster.

Wheels Up (Booth N504) closed an equity-based fundraising round of $117.5 million in October and says it now has an enterprise value of $1 billion. Fidelity Management and Research Co. and investments managed by T. Rowe Price Associates led the latest round.

Four years from now?

“I think we can be a $5 billion to $10 billion company,” CEO Kenny Dichter said during a press conference at NBAA.

Wheels Up currently operates 80 new aircraft, including 65 King Air 350i aircraft and 15 Citation Excel/XLS business jets. It is looking to add pre-owned Citation Xs to its fleet as soon as the first quarter of 2018 with plans to acquire eight to 10 Citation X jets by the end of 2018, Dichter said.

The company has about 4,000 members. Around 65% are individuals and 35% are corporate members. By 2020, it expects membership to reach 10,000.

“There’s no reason by 2025 into 2030 we shouldn’t have 25,000 or 30,000 members,” Dichter said. Member retention rate is running at 85%.

The company has been investing in digital technology. And it has partnered with 94 business jet operators who have completed Wheels Up’s safety audit to supplement its lift requirements.

When the company was founded four years ago, Wheels Up placed an order for 105 King Airs, then increased the order to 110. It plans to take delivery of 20 King Airs in 2018.

“We should be every year taking more airplanes than we took the year before,” he said.

Wheels Up plans to expand into Western Europe but will wait to see what happens with regulations under Brexit. That will become clearer in the next year, Dichter said.

—Molly McMillin
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Garmin Soars Into Transport Category Part 25 Jets

Once pooh-poohed by competitors as just another bug smasher radio company, Garmin (Booth C12412) rapidly is climbing into the ranks of major FAR Part 25 transport category avionics firms. The Olathe, Kansas, firm’s aviation division now is a $439 million business, a full 10% greater than 2015. Garmin’s annual sales now top $3 billion.

Major investments in new avionics technologies are propelling its ascent into the transport category aircraft segment. Garmin is debuting its 3-D volumetric scanning GWX Doppler radar that is capable of lightning and hail prediction, turbulence detection to 40 nm and ground clutter suppression, among other features. The GWX 80 is making its debut on Textron Aviation’s CE-700 Citation Longitude.

Garmin’s new GHD 2100 projector HUD also is making its debut on the Longitude. It features a 30-deg.-wide by 24-deg.-high field of view and ties into the aircraft’s G5000 avionics. It provides synthetic vision background imagery supplied by the G5000. An EVS sensor is on Garmin’s development road map.

The G5000 has been selected by Textron Aviation for most of its new production Cessna Citations. It’s also found a home aboard Learjet 70/75 mid-light jets. Retrofit programs for Part 25 aircraft include the Beechjet 400A/400XP and Citation Excel/XLS. Such retrofits typically trim 200 lb. or more from aircraft empty weight, while enabling older retrofits typically trim 200 lb. or more from aircraft empty weight, while enabling older programs to comply with the 2020 ADS-B mandate and other requirements for operating in the NextGen airspace environment.

While Garmin is moving upmarket into transport category, it’s also continuing to invest in its Part 23 aircraft avionics line up. This week the firm is announcing a G3000NXi upgrade for the Cessna CE-510 Mustang and several touchscreen display systems for piston and turboprop aircraft. —Fred George

Frasca Sells CJ1+ FTD to Oxford Academy

Frasca International Inc. has received an order for a second Cessna Citation CJ1+ Flight Training Device (FTD) from CAE Oxford Aviation Academy in Mesa, Arizona. The FTD will be qualified as a Level 5 device and will feature Frasca’s Simplicity Instructor Operator Station. The first CJ1+ FTD was delivered in 2013. The FTDs will support CAE’s MPL (Multi-Crew Pilot License) program for Japan Airlines. The Mesa location also uses Frasca Piper Archer and Seminole and Diamond DA40 and DA42 FTDs. Frasca is at Booth N1622.

La Compagnie Orders Two A321neos

Paris-based all-business-class airline La Compagnie has ordered two Airbus A321neos for delivery in 2019. The aircraft will be powered by CFM Leap engines and will replace two leased Boeing 757’s that the airline currently operates on its Paris-Newark route. The A321neos will have about the same capacity as the 757’s, but a final configuration has not yet been defined. La Compagnie will have 12-year leases from GECAES for the aircraft. The airline operates two daily flights between Charles de Gaulle International Airport and Newark Liberty International Airport.

Universal Avionics Offers Incentives at NBAA

Universal Avionics is introducing two new incentive programs for attendees at this year’s show. The company is offering a UniLink UL-800 or UL-801 Communications Management Unit (CMU) at no charge for any customer who places a purchase order for an InSight Display System on or before Dec. 31, 2017. The second program offers customers one year of the FlightAssure Extended Warranty Program at no charge with the purchase of any UniLink UL-800 or UL-801 CMU for orders placed on or before Dec. 31, 2017. Universal is at Booth N2821 and the Static Display 10.

Maine Aviation Awarded ARGUS Platinum

MAC Air Group’s charter division – Maine Aviation Aircraft Charter LLC – was awarded the ARGUS Platinum Rating, the highest and most prestigious rating that ARGUS offers. Maine Aviation Aircraft Charter underwent a significant industry auditing process beginning in January 2017 in which the Aviation Research Group (ARGUS) evaluated the company’s current policies, processes and procedures against regulatory policies and industry best practices. The group was found to have exemplary standards and satisfied all of the necessary requirements for the platinum rating – the most requested symbol of quality for charter operators around the world.

Williams Earns Certification for FJ44-4A-QPM

The Williams International FJ44-4A-QPM engine has been awarded type certification and production certification by the FAA and EASA, and production deliveries have begun. Two of these turbofan engines power the new Pilatus PC-24 Super Versatile Jet that will begin deliveries later this year. The engines are rated for normal takeoff thrust of 3,435 lbf at ISA+8C, and more than 5% added thrust is available if needed through a new automatic thrust reserve feature. The PC-24 will be the first FJ44 application to take advantage of Williams’ Quiet Power Mode, a proprietary feature allowing the FJ44 to provide quiet, efficient ground power, eliminating the need for a traditional APU. Booth G8126.
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The job was similar to a modification announced in January this year when an aircraft undergoing green cabin completion work was sold and the desired changes were incorporated into the process to meet the requirements of the new owner.

Greenpoint began its role in the 787 completion process in 2013, investing more than $1 million in research and development into the new process of building and installation interiors in the new, all-electric, carbon fiber 787 fuselage.

The aircraft cabin alone contains approximately 26 mi. of new wiring with more than 17,000 terminals that require connection to the electrical architecture without causing power overloads or interference. An entirely new data set was needed.

“From the beginning, we approached the 787 with an innovative mindset,” said Greenpoint Design Director Annika Svore Wicklund. It was a mindset that involved all aspects, from such initial challenges as decompression and floor structure attachment to leather panels and the absence of hardwood banding on the cabinetry.

The company’s first VIP 787 completion was a static display highlight at EBACE 2016, the product of a close collaboration with Pierrejean Design Studio of Paris and aircraft acquisition and management provider Kestrel Aviation of Kirkland, Washington.

The interior was not only functional but in many ways a work of art. Visitors were met in a grand entry foyer entrance that included domed ceilings, hardwood flooring, leather bulkheads, custom artwork and extensive accent lighting.

Perhaps most impressive was the master suite with bedroom and master washroom/lavatory. The California king bed, oversized shower and dual sinks spoke of ample space for two. It was described by Greenpoint as “a sanctuary for rest and rejuvenation.”

This year has been a particularly good one for VIP 787s at Greenpoint. In addition to the modification contracts, the company signed contracts in February for two green completion jobs with a single customer. It will be Greenpoint’s third 787-8 and the company’s (as well as the industry’s) first VIP 787-9 model.

Greenpoint’s next VIP 787-8 delivery is due in early 2018, followed by two additional 787-8s inducted later that year, and the 787-9 inducted in 2019. At this point, the company claims it is tracking at 100% for on-time 787 program deliveries.

“Our clients know the complexity of these programs and the challenges they present,” said Greenpoint Executive VP Bret Neely. “Our on-time delivery performance and over 315,000 hr. of 787 engineering design and development experience assure our clients we will perform.” Booth N908.
GE Honda united two of the most respected engine manufacturers to develop one of the world’s most advanced jet engines. Such an engine deserves an equally superior form of service—which is why we created EMC. We keep your engine performing up to our highest standard so you’re always cleared for takeoff.

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With Honeywell's HTF7700L turbofan newly certified for the Cessna Longitude, the engine family powers almost all super-midsize jets on the market today.

“The HTF7000 family has achieved more than 3.5 million flight hours, with best-in-class dispatch reliability and demonstrated low cost of ownership,” says Brian Sill, president for engines and power systems at Honeywell Aerospace. The Longitude represents the fourth OEM to select the engine, which also powers the Gulfstream G280, Bombardier Challenger 300/350 and Embraer Legacy 450/500.

The engine is well on its way to dominating that business jet segment since the 7,000-lb.-thrust-class powerplant was introduced into service in 2004 on the Bombardier Challenger 300.

The milestone 2,000th HTF7000 will be delivered next year. Today, the engine family is demonstrating a dispatch reliability of 99.96%, which translates to only one delayed or canceled trip in 1,000 flights due to an engine-related issue.

There might not be many new models on the horizon for the HTF7000 to power, but Sill asserts that Honeywell intends to maintain its position as the engine of choice in the super-midsize segment. To that end, it continues to invest in new technology “to make sure that when and if a new centerline or a significant refresh is needed that we’re there with components at the right technology readiness level. So we’re investing in hot-section technology, be it materials or coatings, and continued advancements in aerodynamics.”

Future improvements will be aimed at thrust-to-weight ratio, fuel consumption, durability and reliability, and cost of ownership, he says.

The engine is already rated for on-condition maintenance where it is not removed from the airframe until noticeable performance deterioration or a failure occurs, and some have remained “on-wing” for up to 10,000 hr. This, Honeywell says, translates to a 30% reduction in cost of ownership compared to that of older engines in the same thrust class.

With the HTF7000, Honeywell pioneered use of its Aerospace Remote Connect tool (ARC), which allows technicians in Phoenix, Arizona, to remotely plug in to the aircraft or the engine to help troubleshoot a problem. “We don’t actually have to deploy field service engineers or technicians,” says Sill. Honeywell is at Booth N5100. —John Morris

Honeywell Certifies Engine for Longitude

Honeywell's HTF7700L turbofan has been certified for the Cessna Longitude – Textron is the fourth manufacturer to choose it.

With Honeywell's HTF7700L turbofan newly certified for the Cessna Longitude, the engine family powers almost all super-midsize jets on the market today.

Honeywell boasts a dispatch reliability of 99.96% for its HTF7000-family turbofans, which have logged more than 3.5 million flight hours since entering service on the Bombardier Challenger 300 in 2004. Delivery of the 2,000th engine is expected next year.

BizAv, General Aviation Avionics Sales on Upswing

Worldwide business and general aviation avionics sales totaled $1.14 billion during the first half of 2017, up 2.7% from the same time last year, according to the Aircraft Electronics Association.

Retrofit sales totaled $643.9 million during the first half of the year, up 26.3% from $509.7 million in the first half of 2016. Forward-fit sales totaled $501.0 million during the first six months of 2017, down 17.3% from $605.5 million during the same time a year ago.

Of the total sales by market for the first six months of 2017, 70.6% came from the U.S. and Canada, with the remainder from international customers.

“It’s encouraging to see a positive increase in year-over-year sales for two straight quarters, something we haven’t experienced since 2014,” said AEA President Paula Derks. The retrofit market has seen the biggest growth in sales, which helped offset a decline in forward-fit sales.

For the second quarter of 2017, sales totaled $578.8 million, a 5.4% increase over second-quarter 2016 sales of $549.2 million. Second-quarter sales included $321.1 million in retrofit sales and $257.7 million in forward-fit sales, according to AEA. —Molly McMillin

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Rolls-Royce App Adds ‘AOG Alert’ to CorporateCare

A new mobile app for its CorporateCare service will further reduce the time it takes Rolls-Royce to respond to its engine customers throughout the world.

Called the Business Aviation Availability mobile app, the new service will feature an “AOG Alert” to give operators instant access to real-time service support. It can trigger deployment of service engineers, logistics specialists, planners and operations specialists to solve an engine issue and avoid a customer missing their next planned trip. The app will go live on Dec. 1.

Rolls-Royce experts typically resolve an aircraft AOG in less than 18 hr., and less than 1% of issues cause the customer to miss the next planned trip. “This will signal AOGs almost like a beacon,” says Scott Shannon, senior VP for customers – business aviation. The customer can pull up to the location of the nearest Rolls-Royce representative and service center and launch, if they wish, their own AOG case and then follow the progress of that case at our main service desk in Berlin as it unfolds. They don’t have to do it that way, but it gives them the ability to dive right into our database in real time and look at all the drivers that are being deployed to fix their AOG problem. It could be quite a game-changing application.”

Well over 2,000 aircraft are enrolled in the CorporateCare pay-by-the-hour maintenance program, and about 70% of new deliveries sign up for it. “We’ve also made good progress enrolling aircraft originally not on CorporateCare when they transfer to a new owner.

“We’ve seen a real big kick up upon transfers of aircraft now that the market, in terms of sales of pre-owned aircraft, is improving, and a lot of customers are recognizing that aircraft on CorporateCare tend to sell in half the time of those that aren’t.”

Rolls-Royce (Booth C8137) is further extending its global network of Authorized Service Centers (ASC) for its CorporateCare customers beyond the 74 in place around the world today. It is adding ExecuJet Aviation Group, with sites in Melbourne and Perth, Australia; and ExecuJet’s Sydney facility and headquarters for the Australasian region will be upgraded to a Rolls-Royce service hub.

Rolls-Royce is also renewing its contract with Dallas Airmotive as a Mobile Repair Service Center. — John Morris

Gulfstream Showcases Cabin Design Capabilities

GULFSTREAM IS FEATURING its customer-centric design program at this year’s show. Attendees can tour a number of Gulfstream aircraft at the Henderson Executive Airport static display, including a newly designed four-living-area Gulfstream G650ER, the fully outfitted Gulfstream G500 production aircraft and an updated Gulfstream G600 cabin.

The static will also offer an interactive, virtual look at Gulfstream cabin design through the Gulfstream Design Studio. Visitors will have the opportunity to dynamically browse and arrange an array of upholsteries, leathers and veneers through immersive virtual experiences to see firsthand the range of cabin personalization options. A similar studio will be part of the company’s exhibit at Booth N5132.

“The cabin is where our customers live, work, play and relax, so it is paramount that they have complete confidence that each aspect and intricate detail of their cabin is a seamless extension of their taste,” said Gulfstream President Mark Burns.

Also at the static, Gulfstream’s Cave Automatic Virtual Environment (CAVE) 3-D Experience will allow customers, in collaboration with an interior designer, to tailor a cabin floor plan and interior elements inside an immersive, 360-deg. environment with just the click of a button.
The 6,450 nm Falcon 8X offers you the ultimate in precision flight. Our unique Digital Flight Control System executes flight path decisions smoothly and efficiently, even at Mach .90. And our revolutionary FalconEye™ vision system can see runways at night, even in extreme weather conditions. Falcon 8X. Fly farther. Achieve more.
Top-Tier Signature Setslles Into Expanded Role

Signature Flight Support, the world’s largest FBO network, with more than 200 locations, is nearly finished integrating Landmark Aviation into the family. As if that weren’t enough, plans are to continue its growth-through-acquisition strategy.

“We’ve worked hard over the last several months on our commercial programs to ensure that our customers benefit from our entire [integrated] network,” said Maria Sastre, president and CEO. “This was the last step of the full integration – making sure that all of our commercial programs were balanced in a way that our customers could benefit from the new network’s size and scale.”

Sastre said the company is investing significant sums training new employees and those moving from Landmark to Signature. In addition, Signature spent nearly $60 million in upgrading infrastructure in the new and existing locations.

“We’ve also opened three new sites this year,” said Sastre.

Signature opened new facilities at Cleveland Burke Lakefront Airport (BKL), Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GRR) in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Boeing Field King County International Airport (BFI) in Seattle.

Signature razed the old Seattle facility and hangar as part of the airport’s redevelopment process. Its new $11.5 million facility consists of a 6,250-sq.-ft. executive terminal with energy-efficient LED technology for lighting and high-efficiency climate control. Signature collaborated with Boeing Field King County Airport, King County Water and Land Resources Department, and King County Department of Permitting and Environmental Review to establish an experimental system for storm water management as part of the new development.

In a recent interview, Sastre gave her views on a few topics of interest to Signature and the industry at large.

On the hurricane-related spike in fuel costs: “From a macro standpoint, this was an interim disruption in the capacity of the system, in Texas primarily. But there are other variables that come into play that could affect fuel pricing. We are carefully monitoring the situation.”

Sastre added: “I was amazed at the rate at which the fuel supply came back online in Florida” following Hurricane Irma, referring specifically to the ports of Everglades, Tampa Bay and Jacksonville. Signature has 14 fuel suppliers in its network.

Privatization of the air traffic control system: “I think the entire GA industry should be concerned. We see this for what it is: an attempt by airlines to control and monopolize access. We don’t see a positive outcome for GA.”

There is an ongoing lobbying effort by the NBAA and GAMA to reach a compromise with the U.S. Congress on ATC privatization, said Sastre. But those proposed interim and long-term solutions to make the ATC system more efficient and growth friendly without having to privatize the entire system aren’t moving. Making matters worse is the FAA’s inability to get a comprehensive reauthorization bill.

Said Sastre, “FAA hands are tied in the [ATC] infrastructure because it can’t get congressional approval for a longer-term plan. It doesn’t make sense to us to abandon all that and start from scratch.”

As for news from NBAA, Signature plans to make a few major announcements that are “industry leading and innovative for Signature,” said Sastre. “They are not traditional in our space, but certainly important in terms of how we move forward as an organization.”

—Robert W. Moorman

Bombardier Grows Tucson Interior Facility

Bombardier is growing its service presence, which includes the opening of a newly expanded interior facility at its Tucson Service Center.

The Tucson expansion features a tripling in size of its cabinet workshop.

With the expansion, Bombardier has been able to regroup its interior design expertise into one climate-controlled studio, it notes. Its cabin workshop has grown from 1,092 sq. ft. to 4,800 sq. ft. and will complement the existing seat and divan upholstery fabrication areas, the company said.

Bombardier’s Tucson Service Center is the largest of nine service centers, with one million sq. ft. of hangar space.

In April, the company opened a service center in Tianjin, China; it’s investing more in its Biggin Hill facility in Europe; and its Hartford, Connecticut, center has grown 20% this year. It will expand other service centers in the months to come.

“We’re investing significantly right now to expand our presence,” said Jean-Christophe Gallagher, Bombardier Business Aircraft VP and general manager of customer experience.

In all, its aftermarket support includes almost 3,000 employees, 82 field service representatives, 16 mobile repair units, 15 regional support offices, one customer response aircraft and five line stations.

The company has reorganized how it is supporting customers with its mobile units. They once were attached to a particular service center. Now a new control center in Wichita dispatches the units from a single center. “This is all about speed of response,” Gallagher said.

—Molly McMillin
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Atlantic Aviation’s Family Grows

Atlantic Aviation’s growth-through-acquisition strategy continues with its recent agreement to purchase the assets of Orion Jet Center at Miami Opa-Locka Executive (OPF).

Orion features more than 200,000 sq. ft. of newly constructed hangar space, which can handle large business jets. The facility also includes 36,000 sq. ft. of office and maintenance space. The recently renovated executive terminal includes three conference rooms, a crew lounge, showers and sleep rooms, as well as a VIP lounge. Terms of the accord were not disclosed.

In May 2017, the wholly owned subsidiary of Macquarie Infrastructure Corp. acquired the Keystone FBO at Waterbury-Oxford Airport (OXC) in Oxford, Connecticut, which serves as a key gateway to the New York City and New England areas.

These acquisitions bring to 71 the number of FBOs in Atlantic’s sprawling FBO network in the U.S. “We continue to spend an inordinate amount of growth and development capital at our existing locations, to the tune of around $200 million over a three-year period,” said Louis Pepper, CEO of Plano, Texas-based Atlantic Aviation.

In February of this year, Atlantic completed construction of its new FBO in Portland, Oregon. The campus includes two 30,000-sq.-ft. hangars capable of housing the Gulfstream G650 and Bombardier Global 6000. In mid-December 2016, Atlantic acquired the former GE hangar in Newburgh, New York. The 100,000-sq.-ft. facility includes the 60,000-sq.-ft. heated hangar and 40,000 sq. ft. of shop and office space.

In a recent interview, Pepper did not list any regulatory concerns, but he said he’s closely following the full court press by the U.S. Congress and airlines to privatize the air traffic control system. “We [Atlantic] are opposed to privatization and support the NBAA’s position,” he said.

In mid-September, the NBAA and four other general aviation organizations urged transportation leaders in Congress to strip the controversial proposal to privatize the nation’s ATC system from the pending FAA reauthorization bill.

As to Atlantic’s future, “we remain bullish on the future of general aviation and will continue to expand where it makes sense. Atlantic is a long-term player. We’re not a roll-up. We’re not looking to exit the business.”

—Robert W. Moorman

Cutter Expands Operations
New FBO Acquisitions on Horizon

CUTTER AVIATION, THE oldest family owned and operated FBO in the U.S., is expanding its existing properties and could add a new FBO in early 2018 to its network.

“We are in serious conversations with a couple of folks,” said William W. Cutter, president and CEO of Cutter Aviation. “Sometime next year we will likely add another facility to our group.” The deal could involve buying or managing an FBO somewhere in Arizona, Texas, California, New Mexico or Colorado, he added.

Elsewhere there is noteworthy activity. The midsize FBO chain is in the process of getting permission to build new hangars near its FBO at Phoenix Deer Valley Airport (DVT). Groundbreaking for the $7 million project is expected in early 2018.

The company also has tentative plans to grow its charter operation, said Cutter. On Aug. 3, Cutter Aviation opened its new 6,000-sq.-ft., log-cabin-like FBO terminal at the Colorado Springs Municipal Airport.

Cutter Aviation began its FBO operation in Colorado Springs in August 2006 with the purchase of the existing FBO, Discount Fuels. As business grew, Cutter leased additional space on the west side of the airport. Following negotiations with the city, Cutter leased eight additional acres, which became the new site for the just-opened “mountain retreat themed” executive terminal, replete with a 62,000-gal. fuel farm. Adjacent to the new FBO is a 23,000-sq.-ft. hangar Cutter purchased from the city in 2015.

In mid-September Cutter opened a 60,000-sq.-ft. hangar and office building near its facilities. Sierra Nevada Corp., a technology-based company with interests in commercial, military and space aviation, is renting the entire facility, which is large enough to fit two Boeing 737s or three Lockheed C-130 Hercules.

Apart from its FBO business, Cutter is a top dealer for Piper Aircraft, Daher-Socata and Honda Aircraft Co. It also has a growing MRO operation.

No major announcements are planned for this NBAA convention, but Cutter will show a short video to attendees: “90 Years in 60 Seconds.”

—Robert W. Moorman
The Phenom 300 — the best-selling business jet in the world — is a clean-sheet-design light aircraft that delivers best-in-class speed and field performance, next-generation avionics, a spacious cabin and a largest-in-class baggage compartment. Its comfortable, highly intuitive cockpit, with large displays and state-of-the-art avionics, enhances situational awareness. Delivering superior comfort and style, the Oval Lite® cabin provides ample leg and head room and the largest galley and windows in its class, for abundant natural light.

Up to 11 occupants also enjoy the best cabin altitude in the category. Contributing to its enviable presence on the ramp, the signature air stair leads to the largest entrance door in its class. The Phenom 300’s superior overall performance, combined with class-leading fuel efficiency, reinforce its breakthrough status and strong acceptance in the marketplace.

“What inspired my purchase was a combination of the passion and love of aviation and to pilot a jet like the Phenom 300. But also for business purposes, I can fly around the world and meet with vendors who supply us raw materials. I can meet with retailers, so it’s very exciting to fly very quickly to them and avoid the delays and cancellations of commercial air travel. Plus, you can fly into smaller airports that are closer to your destination.

And what got me so excited about Embraer was its DNA building airliners, the ERJs. I always tell people Embraer forgot it’s building executive jets. They still believe they’re building airliners for endurance, safety, redundancy.

Embraer treats me as well or better than its airline customers. The company goes out of its way to keep the plane upgraded with service bulletins, improving the systems of the plane, improving every aspect of the airplane. I like the fact that Embraer is just constantly improving the Phenom 300, and they do a phenomenal job of keeping parts in stock.

The plane is very stable. Passengers like the combination of the safety of the airplane, the advanced avionics, combined with the comfort of the plane. The lavatory being externally serviceable is awesome for both the owners/operators and passengers.

I wanted the latest, greatest, best, safest technology, and Embraer had it all, from the avionics to the engines to the systems.”

- Wayne Gorsek, Founder & CEO, DrVita.com

Watch Wayne’s story and request more information at EmbraerExecutiveJets.com/Wayne
Hawthorne Expands, Buying and Building

Hawthorne Global Aviation Services is having a busy year, with the acquisition of a new FBO, new jet equipment and fuel provider, and wireless service for customers.

In May, Hawthorne (Booth C9238) announced the acquisition of JetSun Aviation Center, a Sioux City, Iowa, FBO at Sioux Gateway Airport (KSUX). The Sioux City FBO has more than 100,000 sq. ft. of hangar space, a FAR Part 145 repair station, full maintenance and avionics capabilities, a large reception area, and conference and other amenities.

“The Sioux City FBO is a key addition to our growing FBO network, now with six FBOs located across the East Coast, Midwest and South,” said Hawthorne President and CEO Bryon Burbage. Hawthorne also selected Shell/Eastern Aviation as its fuel provider for the SUX FBO.

In a recent interview with ShowNews, Burbage said Hawthorne is considering the acquisition of two FBOs to its network, one in the Southeast, the other on the West Coast. No acquisition announcement was planned for this year’s NBAA convention.

Hawthorne’s network includes FBOs at Long Island MacArthur in Islip, New York; Cobb County International in Atlanta; and Chicago Executive. A new 30,000-sq.-ft. hangar in Chicago is in the early stages of development. Plans for the oft-talked-about 30,000-sq.-ft. hangar at Islip appear ready to proceed, Burbage added.

In June, ExcelAire, a Hawthorne boutique aircraft management and charter firm, added a 14-passenger-capable Gulfstream G450 long-range business jet and Cessna Citation Latitude to its growing fleet of business jets.

“With the new Latitude, we now offer our clients another choice in midsize jets as we continue to grow our fleet of midsize and heavy jets,” said ExcelAire President Robert Molsbergen.

Hawthorne is an Embraer Authorized Service Center for maintenance of the Legacy jets in ExcelAire’s charter fleet.

—Robert W. Moorman

Sheltair Shines Up Existing Facilities as New Buys on Hold

Sheltair Aviation, the FBO, property and leasing business, is sprucing up its existing facilities before adding any more additions to its family.

“We’ve focused mainly on expanding our own facilities,” said Sheltair COO Warren Kroeppel. “There is a lot of new demand for new hangar space.”

In the past year, Sheltair, which has 17 facilities in Florida, Georgia and New York, added a new hangar at its Savannah base; another one is planned for there. Two new hangars were completed at its Orlando base, and the company is well along in constructing another hangar at its Tampa base. (Last year, Sheltair acquired Tampa International Jet Center at Tampa International Airport.)

Steel is up on a new hangar at Sheltair’s Farmington, New York, base, and the outer structure of a hangar will soon be erected at its Westhampton, New York, facility. The Fort Lauderdale base is completing eight new tilt-up concrete hangars, ranging from 20,000 to 30,000 sq. ft.

Sheltair’s mutually beneficial partnership with Jet Aviation, a General Dynamics company, continues to improve. “We assist each other’s customers through both our networks,” said Kroeppel. “We can offer their customers the development of office and hangar space. They can offer our clients some of their services, such as charter, maintenance and crew services. We’re trying to become a one-stop shop for all our customers.”

Like other FBOs, Sheltair is concerned about the push by airlines and certain members of Congress to privatize the U.S. air traffic control system. “It seems that the deck is stacked against general aviation,” said Kroeppel.

Several questions need to be answered before Congress votes to remove ATC from the FAA. Said Kroeppel: “How would this new system be allocated? How will payments for the new ATC system be made? A lot depends on how the new system is structured. It could be detrimental to general aviation.”

As for buying more FBOs, Kroeppel said: “We are not interested in putting dots on a map. We look strategically at what makes sense for us. The Tampa acquisition is working, and there are others in the pipeline that may or may not work.”

As FBOs move to enhance the safety of their operations, “Sheltair is fully behind the safety management system efforts underway,” said Kroeppel. “In fact, we are currently working on full International Standard for Business Aircraft Handling [IS-BAH] certification for all our bases.”

In late June, Sheltair Chairman, CEO and founder Gerald Holland was inducted into the Florida Aviation Business Association Entrepreneurial Excellence Hall of Fame.

In addition to its FBOs, Sheltair leases offices and hangars at 21 airports throughout the U.S. It also is involved in construction of facilities and construction management. Booth N4314.

—Robert W. Moorman
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Jet Aviation is having an active 2017 with the acquisition of two FBOs and enhancements to existing facilities.

The purchase of the former Ross Aviation FBO at Washington Dulles International Airport in January near Washington, D.C., makes this member of the Jet Aviation family the second largest of its facilities in North America.

“We have had Dulles on our radar screen for some time and are fortunate to acquire this location,” said David Paddock, Jet Aviation senior vice president and general manager, who oversees flight services for the U.S and the Caribbean.

The Dulles facility comes with a relatively new terminal and six hangars on 10 acres of ramp space. The FBO includes a VIP lounge, on-site customs and immigration facility, conference rooms and on-site car rental.

In April, Jet Aviation (Booth N4632) acquired the San Juan, Puerto Rico-based Pazos FBO at the Luis Muñoz Marin International Airport. President Jose Maldonado and his team of 61 employees manage the facility, rebranded as Jet Aviation San Juan. The facility has 20,000 sq. ft. of space and an on-site Customs and Border Protection terminal.

Internal changes have occurred as well. In late September, Jet Aviation opened a new 12,000-sq.-ft. facility at its Boston-Bedford FBO 20 mi. northwest of Boston. The FBO features two customer lounge areas, two pilot shower rooms, a snooze room and a pilot lounge with two privacy rooms. There are also two conference rooms with full videoconferencing capabilities. Earlier, the chain unveiled its new 40,000-sq.-ft. hangar on site.

The company shut down its MRO operations at Bedford, focusing on FBO services instead.

“We did what we did at Teterboro Airport one and a half years ago by bringing in the OEMs to support maintenance for our tenants,” says John Langevin, VP of FBO operations, North America. Bringing OEMs on-site for maintenance represented “a trend” for mid-size FBOs, he says.

On the West Coast, Jet Aviation has two interests in the Los Angeles area. At Van Nuys, old hangars will be replaced with a new terminal, tenant hangar and maintenance facility in conjunction with partner Gulfstream, also a General Dynamics company. Completion is slated for the third quarter of 2018.

Jet Aviation bought Burbank, California-based AvJet Corp., a jet-charter and management company, in March 2016. With that acquisition came 40 aircraft under management, as well as a charter and line maintenance operation.

Paddock spoke candidly in a recent interview about the issues and challenges affecting the FBO industry.

“The industry will never be fully consolidated because there are small family operations that have the interest and money to invest in FBOs,” he said. “There will always be small chains in specific markets. I don’t see the day coming when all FBOs will be controlled by two or three players.”

Paddock voiced concern about the trend of the short-term investors versus the long-term strategic investors, such as Jet Aviation. “As a strategic owner, we are looking at operating FBOs for the long term.”

On the trend of FBOs seeking International Standard for Business Aircraft Handling (IS-BAH) registration: “We support strong safety practices and standards, such as IS-BAH. We’re actively working to get a consistent safety management system across all of our lines of business globally.”

On partnerships: “This is an effective way to expand our footprint and service offering to our customers,” said Paddock. “The partnerships gives us stronger market presence, but the essential reason is to offer a broader product.”

Jet Aviation partners with Sheltair and Jet Center at Santa Fe, a full-service FBO in New Mexico.

The multi-pronged Basel, Switzerland-based Jet Aviation also is looking to invest millions of dollars in international markets, such as Singapore, Macau, Dubai, Basel and other locales. More on those plans are likely to come during EBACE 2018 in Geneva.

—Robert W. Moorman
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TAC Air Future Plans for More Properties

TAC Air (Booth C7337 and Static Display 31), the 14-FBO division of the Arnold Companies, is preparing to acquire additional properties to expand its network throughout the U.S.

“We are always in the acquisition mode,” says TAC Air COO Christian Sasfai. He declines to name specific FBOs that could become part of the TAC Air family. Whatever happens will come after this year’s NBAA convention, he says. Meanwhile, TAC continues sprucing up its facilities and adding additional hangar space at selected properties. In the last year, it built a new executive terminal at its Little Rock facility and renovated the terminal at its Knoxville property.

As for the state of business, Sasfai said TAC Air’s larger FBOs at Denver and Omaha are experiencing growth, while the smaller markets are “just holding their own,” he said.

To strengthen its appeal to customers, TAC Air is focusing sharply on enhancing safety throughout its network. In late 2016, TAC Air, which has a safety management system (SMS) in place, became the first FBO chain to achieve the International Standard for Business Aircraft Handling (IS-BAH) accreditation, said the company. IS-BAH accreditation involves a complete audit of an FBO’s SMS, emergency procedures, organizational structure, administrative elements, security procedures, training protocols and operating procedure.

To bolster its operation, TAC Air has hired and promoted the following staff: Joe Gibney, the new director of business development, will focus on business growth and analytical support; Christina Lang is promoted to manager of administrative services; Bob Schick is promoted to director of safety and risk management, overseeing the TAC Air and Keystone Aviation SMS program and employee retention initiatives; Cody Waterman is promoted to manager of safety and training, responsible for TAC Air’s OSHA-compliant and industry training programs; and Rick Shingleur becomes environmental manager as part of his present role as safety and compliance officer.

One area where TAC Air could have an edge on the FBO competition is in acquiring fuel from its sister division, TAC Energy. It does not do so now, surprisingly. TAC Air continues to buy fuel from Phillips 66 and AvFuel.

“We find value in those branded supplier programs and continue to utilize them,” says Sasfai. The ancillary products offered by those suppliers, such as credit card processing and truck leasing, are principal reasons why this FBO chain shops outside for Jet-A.

—Robert W. Moorman

Projects Underway at Wilson Air Center

Wilson’s four FBOs are located at Charlotte, Memphis, Houston Hobby and Chattanooga airports.

At Wilson Air Charlotte, work on the main ramp is complete, as is the ramp for heavy charters and freighters; work on the north ramp is ongoing. Another hangar is planned for sometime this year, said Wilson.

Wilson Air Chattanooga opened a new hangar, and plans are to upgrade the hangar once used by TAC Air, which the Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport Authority purchased in January 2014 for $12.3 million. Wilson Air manages that facility for the airport.

At Wilson Air Memphis, “our business has been even. We’re up a little, but not setting the world on fire,” said Wilson. The servicing of aircraft carrying college and professional sports teams in and out of Memphis helps keep the business steady.

The chief executive has strong opinions on various issues affecting the FBO industry. On consolidation, “I do not believe consolidation is helping our industry - but instead splitting the aircraft owners/operators and industry groups.” He added: “The cost of fuel increases after a consolidation, especially when the airport push for TAC Air to add locations – but not until after the show.

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ADS-B Delays Could Ground 1,000 Bizjets

Satair Group, the Airbus-owned aftermarket services company, is marking its first foray into the business-aviation market by teaming up with Honeywell Aerospace to facilitate ADS-B upgrades. And the firm has issued a stark warning to bizjet owners that not all of them will meet the FAA’s 2020 deadline to complete conversion work.

Satair’s exclusive five-year deal covers inventory management and distribution for all business aircraft equipped with Honeywell’s Primus II integrated communications system, regardless of whether owners and operators opt for replacement, refurbished or loan equipment. Under the FAA’s ADS-B Out mandate, issued in 2010, all jets must have 1090 Extended Squitter Mode S capabilities by July 2020. Failure to comply will have significant consequences.

“For operators who don’t meet the deadline, the prognosis is that they will be relegated to Class B airspace only, under 10,000 ft.,” says Eric Stuck, a business-aviation veteran who joined Satair earlier this year to product-manage the ADS-B program. “They won’t be able to access any airports that they’re normally used to accessing; and flying under 10,000 ft. in a turbofan aircraft is obviously extremely inefficient. So, to all intents and purposes, the airplane is grounded.”

Satair’s involvement, and their investment in inventory, means that the long lead times on certain items required by some configurations of Honeywell Primus II-equipped jets have been eliminated: Stuck says the company currently can offer immediate delivery of all part numbers. Hangar capacity and the availability of sufficient engineers will become limits on conversion work long before supply of spares, he argues. But the large number of jets still to be upgraded makes it highly unlikely that every one of them will be compliant in time.

“Out of about 3,600 airplanes, there’s just shy of 3,000 aircraft in the Primus II fleets that need to be done,” Stuck says. “We’re estimating right now that probably about 1,000 of those will not make it by [the 2020 deadline].”

At present, Stuck estimates, around 20 aircraft per month are going through the upgrade process. This is nowhere near enough.

“I’m tracking the fleet, and as of two months ago, the industry needed to be processing 108 Primus airplanes a month,” Stuck says. “Two months later, that number is up to 118. As the industry continues to drag the uptake, the problem only gets bigger.”

Part of the inertia may have been down to the price structure of the upgrade program. A realignment took place earlier this year, and a revised price schedule was published in August.

“The operators are maybe not fully aware that the new price structure is in existence,” Stuck says. “We would encourage them to get a new Primus II ADS-B quote from their dealer of choice. Everybody can’t wait – there are going to be planes left behind.”

Satair USA is at Booth C9638. Honeywell is at N5100.

Satair Plans Long Stay in Bizjet Market

It may be a newcomer to business aviation, but Satair believes its extensive experience in the commercial marketplace will help the company establish itself in the sector.

“We’re pretty strong in the commercial fixed-wing market,” says Steen Karsbo, VP of business development. “The key requirement to providing efficient support is that you have a very efficient logistic machine running in the background. At the end of the day, whether we apply it to this or to that market doesn’t really matter: The structure itself is important.”

The structure Satair has in place will help the company to bring benefits to customers in the business sector. Karsbo says, by enabling them to tap into a broad base of expertise and inventory.

“The FBO/MROs are the companies that are really the true customers in this sector, from our perspective,” he says. “They will not only do the ADS-B upgrade, they’ll change the filters, they’ll change the igniters, they’ll do this and do that. This is where the broader Satair portfolio comes in to play. When we work with a company like Eaton Aerospace or Pall, they have applications across platforms – commercial, bizjet, helicopters. So we have this new customer base in mind, and now we have set it up: The flow is running, and we can actually start applying additional product lines from our existing OEM partners.”

The Honeywell deal, Karsbo believes, is just the start.

“Eventually we hope to cut other deals, like the Honeywell one, with other large OEMs,” he says. “But the whole game here is about having the customer interface and the structure behind that in place – then you can start to go selling to customers.” —AB

—Angus Batey
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Bombardier Smart Services: They’re Now Smarter Still

Bombardier has launched a new “Smart Services” program, giving business jet customers an expanded menu of coverage choices based on their needs.

For the first time, the program is available on used as well as new aircraft and includes unscheduled maintenance and landing gear overhaul as part of the coverage.

The program builds on its Smart Parts program that gives customers a cost-per-flight-hour service and predictability of the cost of parts. Now labor costs are also included.

The Smart Services program was in response to customer feedback.

Bombardier is offering the program to owners of any Bombardier business jet with up to 20 years of service, as well as to new aircraft coming off the production line.

Customers have the option of including cabin system components and labor costs on scheduled and unscheduled maintenance related to parts removal from normal operations. It is offering enrollment in the program at a flat rate.

“We felt at the start of this year that we needed to relook at these programs,” said Bill Molloy, VP of aftermarket sales and commercial strategy. “We feel like we hit the mark on what our customers have asked us.”

For one, they wanted more choices and the flexibility to choose from an à la carte menu of coverage, Molloy said.

About 1,500 aircraft are currently signed up for Bombardier’s Smart Parts program.

“This is for us a new level of flexibility, We want to provide predictability to our customers.”

—Jean-Christophe Gallagher, Bombardier Business Aircraft VP and general manager of customer experience

Based on data from Bombardier’s former Smart Parts program, aircraft on the program have higher resale values and spend less time on the market, Gallagher said.

The program allows customers to know where the parts are coming from, that the parts are of the highest quality and that they are covered by a warranty in the marketplace, he said. 

Bombardier’s Smart Services program is available on used aircraft, like this 2003 Challenger 604.

—Molly McMillin
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Lord’s Aero President Returns to a Changing Marketplace

Regular NBAA attendees who pride themselves on never forgetting a face may be in for a challenge this week.

“This will be my first NBAA in quite a while,” says Becky Williams, who took over the role of president of Lord Corp.’s aerospace and defense division in June. Williams spent five years as president of the company’s Asian business and before that was working in the automotive sector. But the new job feels like a return to her roots.

“I’ve been with Lord for 38 years,” she says, “and the first part of my career was all about aerospace. I went to many NBAAAs, so I’m looking forward to being back, seeing a lot of old friends and familiar faces, as well as meeting a lot of new people. And I’m excited to be back in the aerospace business – where a lot is still the same, and a lot has changed.”

The similarities Williams has noted are to do with relationships - both personal and corporate - and what she terms “the importance of customer intimacy.” The differences are primarily around the increasing dominance of the bottom line.

“What’s been a gradual change, but having been gone and coming back feels a little more like a step change, is the importance of affordability,” she says. “When I entered the industry it was all about performance: higher, faster, further was what was valued. Now it’s more about, ‘I can give you that same performance at a lower cost.’”

In the business aviation sector, the same factors are in play, but the effects may not yet be felt as strongly as elsewhere in the aerospace industry.

“It happens a little bit later in bizjets, but we’re seeing the same thing,” she says. “Companies that buy business jets are under profit and cost pressure.”

It is a pattern Williams has seen before, and while the analysis may sound downbeat, she believes the aviation sector will weather the storms more easily than some other industries.

“All this happened in automotive ahead of it happening in aerospace,” she says. “The OEMs flowed down very severe price and cost controls on their supply base, which caused a lot of consolidation and loss of strength. I see that same thing now happening in aerospace.”

Lord has been part of the new wave of consolidation, but its acquisitions have helped move the company into adjacent technologies. Growth will be achieved by increasing the percentage of equipment the company supplies to each aircraft: So its purchase of the French avionics supplier Fly By Wire will help increase that share as well as offering opportunities to lower costs.

“The main reason we bought Fly By Wire is because we have high share in our legacy business,” Williams says. “Their product is different to what we’ve been making. But we can leverage the relationships, and to some extent the fixed cost base that we have, in management, sales and marketing.

“Fly By Wire has been very focused on the European market, and one of the key things we want to do is globalize that business,” she continued. “Fly By Wire had not approached bizjet manufacturers in the U.S. - they just didn’t have the resources to extend that far - so we’re looking to expand the application of FBW technology [in the business-aviation sector], particularly cockpit inceptors and controls.”

Visit Lord at Booth N2129. —Angus Batey
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Pratt & Whitney Canada’s FAST is turnkey technology that not only addresses diagnostics and prognostics, but continues to expand – capturing, analyzing and wirelessly sending full-flight engine and aircraft data, according to Tim Swail, VP of customer programs.

FAST (Flight Acquisition Storage and Transmission) is the brainchild of P&W (Booth N2133). It was designed to record a wide range of engine and aircraft data that is downloaded upon landing, allowing a rapid and encrypted aircraft health report and generating automatic alerts of possible events.

“It saves time and money and lowers pilot workload, extends the TBO and keeps the fleet operating,” said Swail.

The FAST solution enables customers to optimize maintenance schedules to reduce operating costs and workload, and to improve maintenance predictability. Customers interested in activating the wireless functionality of FAST may obtain SIM cards compatible with the technology.

There have been numerous upgrades since its introduction in 2011. For example, today raw information is downloaded upon landing to P&WC via cellular technology, and within 15 min. it is delivered to the customer’s server, along with guidance and recommendations.

According to Swail, more than 90% of the P&W 307A engines on the Falcon 7X are FAST-equipped, and STCs have been awarded to the Grand Caravan 208B single-engine turboprop, the Latitude business jet and the twin-engine Leonardo AW139 helicopter. There are STCs as well for the Learjet 60 and the Beech King Air series 200 and 300.

The most recent FAST application is for Gulfstream’s G500, using the FAST backend data center. “It was a big win for us,” added Swail.

The most recent FAST-related innovation is an oil analysis clinical trial that kicked off a year ago. The in-house program, claims P&WC, is a tenfold improvement of the current state of oil analysis, and combined with data collected by FAST, it allows greater predictability. The oil analysis and FAST are both part of the P&WC engine health management suite.

More than 5,000 customers are participating free in the trials. P&WC is adding several new FAST STCs, and at this point some 1,200 aircraft are already using the technology on fixed-wing turboprops and business jets and helicopters. “We are on a transformative journey to become more proactive and preventive as the program expands,” noted Swail.
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ISS Autothrottle Improves the PT6A

Innovative Solutions & Support’s (Indoor Static 2) autothrottle (A/T) system, now approved for first-generation Pilatus PC-12 turboprops, virtually is a takeoff-to-touchdown power management system for the Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A. It finally relieves pilots of having to babysit this venerable but clearly dated engine, to prevent exceeding its torque and temperature limits. Last week, we were invited to ride along, but not to fly, IS&S’s PC-12 to see firsthand its full envelope capabilities.

At San Diego-Montgomery Gibbs (KMYF) Airport, IS&S company pilot Eric Smedberg belted into the left seat of serial number 306. We took notes from the right seat and ran the radios. The system includes a left-side integrated standby display that hosts the autothrottle computer, an engine data concentrator and a throttle lever servo in the center console.

The entire A/T package weighs 7.2 lb. and costs about $60,000 installed. Currently, it’s approved as an add-on for IS&S’s PC-12 flat-panel avionics system, but STCs are in the works for other avionics packages. Expect the next approval to be for PC-12NG aircraft fitted with Honeywell Apex avionics. At the same time, IS&S is pursuing approvals of twin A/T systems for Beech King Airs. A/T packages for the PC-12NG and King Air will require additional hardware and software to link the IS&S autothrottles to other manufacturers’ avionics systems.

There are two basic modes of operation: torque mode and airspeed mode. Torque mode normally is used to set takeoff and climb power. For cruise, the pilot manually can dial in the appropriate torque using flight manual data for maximum and long-range cruise, plus max endurance. Airspeed mode supported commanded airspeed and turbulence speed modes. Envelope protection includes torque, temperature, and overspeed and underspeed protections.

Pre-start and start checks remain unchanged. Once cleared for takeoff on Runway 28R, Smedberg engaged the A/T. The servo advanced the throttle smoothly to prevent torque or temperature overshoot, precisely setting the AFM-published takeoff torque limit for airport elevation and outside air temperature.

As we climbed out toward Julian VOR, Smedberg switched to airspeed hold, causing the A/T to hold 160 KIAS during the ascent. But we noticed that engine torque frequently bumped up against maximum limits, rather than setting the more conservative AFM normal climb torque setting.

After leveling off at 13,500 ft. over Julian, Smedberg dialed down the selected airspeed to the minimum allowable for the aircraft, payload and fuel weights entered into the system. Fuel consumption is tracked by the computer, so minimum allowable airspeed is dynamic with weight change.

Smedberg allowed the aircraft to decelerate. As it approached minimum speed, the A/T advanced the throttle lever to prevent the aircraft from slowing below a safe airspeed. As he maneuvered the aircraft, the A/T kept it well below the angle of attack where the stick shaker or stick pusher would have been triggered.

While most pilots will never test such envelope protection limits, they’re likely to use the A/T system for flying approaches quite routinely. We called SOCAL approach and asked for clearance to fly the RNAV (RNP) Z Runway 24 procedure into Carlsbad’s McGlellan-Palomar airport.

Smedberg coupled the autopilot, programmed the IS&S flat-panel display system’s internal FMS, and dialed in 150 KIAS as the desired speed. We flew directly to Julian VOR and descended progressively to step-down fixes. While IS&S FMS VNAV isn’t capable of flying directly between vertical waypoints, it will maintain a fixed-rate descent to final and missed approach fixes while respecting intermediate crossing restrictions.

The FMS also is fully capable of flying radius-to-fix curved legs, but our entry from Julian, 35 mi. east of the airport, essentially was a straight-in on a track of 257 deg. with one turn to the 245-deg. final approach course 5.8 mi. from the threshold.

On the missed approach, Smedberg pressed the TOGA button on the throttle. This initiated go-around display on the flight director and caused the A/T system to advance the throttle to maximum allowable takeoff torque.

In typically CAVU conditions in early October in San Diego, we canceled our instrument clearance and climbed southwest to 3,500 ft. We joined V-23 to fly down to Mount Soledad en route to Montgomery-Gibbs Airport for landing.

Our observations? IS&S autothrottles are a significant safety advancement for aircraft powered by PT6A turboprop engines. The PT6A A/T is the next best thing to a FADEC because it slashes pilot workload from takeoff to short final. It also provides flight envelope protections as well as guards against engine exceedances. We’ll have more to say about the system when we have a chance to fly it.

—Fred George
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GE’s ‘Printed Turboprop’ Seen as Catalyst

The world’s most “printed engine,” GE’s new Advanced Turboprop in which additive manufacturing replaces 855 normally made parts with just 12 “printed” components, is on track to run for the first time at the end of this year in Prague. It will power Cessna’s new Denali aircraft.

“The ATP, which GE has designed to offer up to 20% better fuel burn and 10% more power than an equivalent-sized 800- to 1,650-shp Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6, looks as though it will exceed initial performance specifications, says Brad Mottier, VP and general manager of GE Aviation’s Business and General Aviation & Integrated Systems operation. GE has committed more than $400 million in development costs, as well as investing more than $1 billion on developing its additive manufacturing capabilities.

In an industry first for an engine this size, the ATP will feature a single-lever FADEC that will manage fuel flow, propeller pitch and speed as well as bleed valves and variable stators within the engine. The result? Jet-like operability for the pilot, with a single “throttle” lever and built-in limit protections that will greatly reduce cockpit workload.

That new level of systems automation could act as a catalyst for the industry to jump to a new level of advanced aircraft featuring more “intelligence” and software-controlled systems, says Mottier. The Denali is the first.

“It’s going to be a catalyst for change,” he explains. “We’ve spent a lot of time flying, both in simulators and airplanes, the competitor’s engine and competitors’ aircraft. We mapped and characterized every control movement from a human factors standpoint, tying it back into the operating handbook, not only for standard operations but also for emergency procedures. Based on that, we have spent a lot of time automating, and therefore eliminating, a lot of the presently required cockpit pilot control interventions.

“We’ve done this in conjunction with Textron, so this is going to result in a significantly simplified cockpit. That’s why that alone is going to be a motive force, a catalyst, for change in the way airplanes can be thought of and simplified in the future, instead of just how fast and how far.”

A Digital Twin

GE is bringing its latest airline engine technology and tapping the resources of the GE Global Research Centers to create a “digital twin” of every Advanced Turboprop (ATP) that enters service.

The “digital twin” will be serial-number specific, and will be fed all the operating data of each engine as it happens, from performance parameters to operating environment. While software will monitor each engine, big data from the worldwide fleet will also be applied to predict future health of the engine. Monitoring could also include self-analysis of line replaceable units (LRUs) and even sensors, such as temperature measuring devices, to prevent unnecessary maintenance actions triggered by a faulty gauge.

It sounds expensive to develop, but Mottier says he didn’t have to pay for the algorithms already developed in other parts of GE. The result? A pay-by-the-hour engine maintenance program that will be “extremely competitive” to that for the rival PT6 engine. “It’s going to be quite revolutionary to bring this type of sophistication into general aviation,” Mottier says.

—John Morris
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Innov8 Brings Affordable Cabins to Older Jets

Older aircraft with obsolete cabin and entertainment systems will likely be condemned to the scrapheap when prospective buyers see how much it costs to upgrade them to today’s standards.

Aircraft hull values have dropped to a point where a $500,000+ cabin system replacement is not an economically sound decision, while extensive market analysis says that few aircraft owners of midsize to ultra-long-range-class aircraft built between 1995 and 2010 will spend more than $250,000, or 10% of the aircraft’s value, on a new cabin management system. And then there are smaller companies and private individuals able to afford a $1.5 million business jet but not a new cabin.

“The business aviation industry must drive cost out of the aircraft system evolution to enable the older aircraft to continue to fly and have economic value to the owners,” says Scott Taylor, business development leader at Innov8, which aims to do just that with specific, low-cost products based on latest and Wi-Fi technologies.

He estimates that more than 8,000 aircraft built from the 1990s through 2010s are facing obsolescence and functionality issues in the cabin. They are still equipped with VHS, audio cassettes, CD, DVDs, with entertainment and management control functions integrated using the same hardware platform and network, but passengers now prefer to carry on their own devices for productivity and entertainment. These not only provide virtually limitless content, they provide it on brilliant, high-definition displays and on devices the passenger uses frequently.

This, says Scott, renders much of a cabin management system obsolete and rarely used, except for features such as moving map, external cameras and satellite TV.

Given that older airplanes usually have internet access, cabin functionality can be bought at a reasonable price, says Taylor. Innov8’s latest solutions can be seen at Booths C8121, N3132 and N3521.

- CFLEX Simplicity products include USB chargers for personal electronic devices and arms to hold them. Recent projects on a Falcon F2000EX and a GIV-SP have expanded the number of aircraft employing the hands-free use and efficient charging of the Simplicity products.
- CFLEX Cast effectively breathes new life into old cabin entertainment management and cabin control systems while affordably and flexibly integrating into existing customer cabins, says Taylor. The CFLEX Cast product line enables current and future sources of entertainment to be wirelessly distributed to the PEDs on the aircraft, including the new CFLEX VŪ bulkhead monitor replacement products from Innov8. CFLEX Cast achieves a truly “wireless cabin” capability, and it does so in an affordable, flexible and supportable manner, adds Taylor.
- CFLEX Command replaces cabin switching devices, many of which have failed since new or replacement parts have become very hard – and expensive – to find.

The cost? “We’re working with our dealer network; we’re determined on having a system with a flyaway price of less than $300,000, and that will be arms, holders, chargers and the wireless cabin,” says Taylor. —John Morris
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n announcing last month a high-throughput satellite service for business aviation, Gogo Business Aviation (Booth C1138) is expanding its broadband connectivity to become a true global provider.

The new service will make use of Gogo’s existing Ku-band satellite network, the same high-capacity network that is currently providing bandwidth for more than 550 commercial aviation aircraft across 10 airlines globally. Service is expected to become available in the second half of 2018.

The 2Ku is a dual antenna system developed by Gogo to bring global streaming-capable internet to large aircraft. It benefits from global coverage and the redundancy of more than 180 satellites in the Ku-band array.

“Gogo’s Ku satellite service will deliver reliable and redundant coverage around the world with streaming class internet and service from takeoff to landing. This means fast web browsing and other activities, such as live streaming video and audio, on-demand movies, large file downloads, and personal smartphone use. And for the cockpit, it means real-time data apps, as well as remote diagnostics and support while in flight. Charter and aircraft management provider K5-Aviation in Gammelsdorf, Germany, is Gogo’s 2Ku business aviation launch customer in Europe.

The aircraft is an ACJ319, and the installation, design and system integration, as well as EASA STC approval, were performed by Fokker Services at its facilities in Hoogerheide, Netherlands.

Saying “a new era in business aviation has begun,” Gogo recently announced receipt of an STC and Parts Manufacturer Approval (PMA) from the FAA for its new dual-directional antennas that will be used with the Gogo Avance L5 system (formerly the Gogo Biz 4G ground-to-air, line replaceable unit).

“Using the proprietary Gogo Biz 4G network, Gogo Avance L5 will deliver an inflight Wi-Fi experience unrivaled by anything else in business aviation,” declared Aguirre.

Created specifically for the business aviation market, the Gogo Biz 4G network is built on the company’s existing ground network of 250 towers and fiber backhaul. The Avance L5 equipment package will incorporate dual-band 802.11ac Wi-Fi service and other features— all from a single box.

The Next Gen network will use a proprietary modem, a new beam-forming antenna and unlicensed spectrum to produce speeds up to 100 Mbps with LTE technology and will leverage Gogo’s existing North American network and infrastructure.

Gogo’s dealers and OEM partners are actively pursuing multiple STCs that will certify the Avance L5 system for installation on more than 40 business aircraft models. The system is providing an upgrade path to Gogo’s Next Gen network, scheduled for launch in 2018. —Kirby Harrison

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Nexcelle: Puts the ‘Pro’ in ‘Propulsion’

For those of you who think a nacelle is just a cover for an engine, you haven’t met Kenneth Onderko. Now you can: He’s here at the show.

Nexcelle doesn’t make nacelles, it makes systems. Integrated power systems, if you please. And perhaps the most integrated power system in business aviation – indeed, the world’s most sophisticated bizjet nacelle – encompasses GE’s Passport engine on Bombardier’s Global 7000.

To Nexcelle President Ken Onderko, the integrated power system is not only a thing of beauty but also a marvel in engineering, from its one-piece extended aluminum inlet-lip outer barrel for reduced aerodynamic drag to its target style thrust reverser with a fixed nozzle to provide lower weight and reverse thrust efficiency.

Bombardier, he says, was extremely demanding in its targets for low weight and low drag – and on the smoothness of the nacelle’s exterior. “This was very challenging on the engineering and integration, and we had to develop new manufacturing processes and tooling,” he says. “We also had to design it for ease of maintenance.”

Nexcelle is a joint venture between GE Aviation’s Middle River Aircraft Systems (Booth C11820) and Safran Nacelles (N1715), modeled on the 40-plus-year record of its parent companies in the GE/Safran CFM International joint venture that makes the CFM56 and Leap airline engines. It has developed the world’s first truly integrated nacelle and power system for China’s Leap-1C-powered C919 airliner, which flew for the first time in May, and the Global 7000 is its second program.

Certification on the Global 7000 is anticipated by the end of the year.

Onderko says the nacelles have completed about 500 cycles in flight test with barely a squawk. “There’s been nothing even minor, really,” he says.

Nexcelle will participate with Bombardier in an integrated service plan in which it expects at least 75% of customers to enroll, he adds.

Future programs are being discussed by Nexcelle. “There are other potential applications,” says Onderko. “And they wouldn’t necessarily have to be a GE engine.”

—John Morris
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Michael Vercio, Textron Aviation’s VP of product support, was in the middle of his daughter’s birthday party one Sunday afternoon when he received a call from a pilot somewhere in rural Mississippi.

The caller was a new customer unsure of where to call about a technical issue that grounded his aircraft. Vercio was new to the position.

As the birthday party continued, “I sat for several hours in my basement working through this,” he said. “I realized how difficult this can be when you’ve got 21 facilities [at that time] in the service network.”

Two years ago, “a lot of the scheduling went through each individual service center, and the mobile service units were tied to a particular service center,” he said.

Enter the company’s January 2016 launch of 1Call, a dedicated call center providing expedited one-stop service 24 hr. a day, seven days a week in aircraft on ground (AOG) situations. Since its launch, the process has cut the time it takes to get an aircraft back in the air by about 60%, said Kriya Shortt, Textron Aviation’s senior VP of customer service.

The number of customers in North America and Europe using the service rather than going to another provider has grown quickly. Dispatch of the company’s mobile service units through the center has expanded more than 100% year over year, while employment levels at the center have increased, said Vercio.

For customers, “Time is a precious commodity,” he said.

In a large room inside the company’s west Wichita service center, representatives from service, scheduling and parts share space with technical specialists on Citation, Hawker, Premier and King Air products. The process gives customers prioritized technical support and expedited parts, access to alternate lift or the dispatch of a mobile service center.

“For us, it’s all about speed,” and how quickly the company learns that a customer has a problem, formulates a solution, provides technical support and parts, and returns the aircraft to service.

When a call comes in, a map is placed on a large screen on the wall. The pin starts the clock on how quickly help is provided, and remains in place until the aircraft is flying again. Other screens track the location of Textron Aviation’s aircraft used for alternate lift, the weather and its fleet of about 60 mobile-service trucks. Another screen contains a list of aircraft whose customers request additional flight following, while another is dedicated only to aircraft. The information is available at each service center. Textron Aviation is at Booth N3530 and Static Display 16.

—Molly McMillin
Have you ever wondered how many general aviation aircraft there are in China? The answer has remained elusive due to the country’s vast size and difficulty in accessing reliable information.

But now Hong Kong aviation services specialist and consultant Asian Sky Group has counted them all. Applying the expertise it has gained with its regular business jet and helicopter surveys that cover Asia as well as China, and insights from sister companies that include Avion Pacific, which buys and sells helicopters and GA aircraft in China and throughout the region, it has compiled its first “China GA Report.”

It’s available by download at http://www.asiansky-group.com/media-reports.

The survey is remarkable in that it doesn’t just list aircraft totals by manufacturer and type (business jets, helicopters, turbine utility and piston-engine aircraft), it also tells you where they are and who operates them. It delves into China’s policy to boost GA by elevating it to a separate industry, and detailing how GA will play a major role in economic development. The report tells how there will be more than 700 GA airports by 2020, and how development of aerospace industrial parks around them could lead to a production over-capacity that will, ironically, stifle growth.

And it explains why the much-talked-about pilot shortage will hit GA harder than the airlines (who wants a low-paying job as a GA flight instructor?), perhaps adding another damper to the GA boom that has been expected to happen for the past 20 years.

Yet the boom has begun, Asian Sky says. GA in China has had annual growth in the number of aircraft of over 10% since 2010, and the growth exceeded 20% in 2013. And last year wasn’t bad, with a more modest growth of 15%.

As of 2016 year-end there were 2,595 aircraft in the mainland China GA fleet. Fixed-wing totaled 1,809, including 329 business jets, 252 turboprop and 1,228 piston and electric aircraft. The rotorcraft fleet is 57% turbine with 514 helicopters, followed by 363 piston-engine helicopters and 20 gyroplanes.

Asian Sky also has in-depth reports available on China’s aviation infrastructure and the pilot training industry in Asia-Pacific.

—John Morris
Dual Boost for Ikhana Twin Otter

Ikhana has secured STCs to upgrade the venerable Twin Otter with new engines and improved avionics, including EVS.

Twin Otter conversion and modification specialist Ikhana Aircraft Services (Booth N2609) has received FAA approval for new upgrades that will increase engine performance for some models and improve pilot situational awareness. As the latest part of its long-running effort to inject new life into the rugged twin turboprop, the Murietta, California-based company has been awarded an STC to re-engine the DHC-6-100/-200 series with Pratt & Whitney Canada’s PT6A-27 in place of the baseline PT6A-20. The change includes authorization to operate at 50 psi (620 shp) of available torque, which provides improved performance especially under hot day, high-pressure altitude conditions. “Not all DHC-6-100/-200 operators benefit from increased payload, but they all want better performance,” says Ikhana president and CEO John Zublin.

The FAA has also approved an Ikhana program to modify the Twin Otter with the Astronics Max-Viz EVS 2300 enhanced vision system sensor, which provides crews with improved situational awareness when flying during day or night in adverse weather conditions. The EVS combines a long-wave infrared un-cooled thermal image blended with a visible light sensor. The blended black and white, dual field of view image is presented on any cockpit video-capable display. A separate color HD-compatible camera feed (720 x 480) can be displayed in the cabin, switched on in the cockpit or recorded.

—Guy Norris
The delivery, which will be made to NetJets, comes 26 months after the first Latitude entered service.

“Two and a half years ago, this business didn’t exist at Cessna,” Textron Aviation President and CEO Scott Ernest said recently. “Now it’s a billion-dollar business,” he said. Latitude lists for $16.35 million.

NetJets extended its total order for Latitudes to up to 200 aircraft when it took delivery of its first one in June 2016. It will take delivery of 28 Latitudes this year. The company delivered 42 Latitudes in 2016.

The aircraft is gaining traction and receiving more global recognition, Ernest said.

“In this business, you have to make educated guesses on what the new products have to be,” Ernest said. “It’s hands-down the No. 1 product out the door.”

Textron Aviation is investing heavily in new products, even though the overall business jet market will likely grow only incrementally, Ernest said. “That’s OK,” he said. “We’re cautiously optimistic that it will go in a positive direction for us.”

The company is building on the lessons learned with the Latitude, a clean-sheet design, in its new Citation Longitude large jet.

The aircraft is at Static Display 36 at NBAA. After the show, the Longitude will make a demonstration tour in North America before going on an international tour.

“It is hands down the quietest cabin in the industry,” Ernest said. “We set out on that mission.”

The company is using acoustic windowpanes, isolated interior panels, damped pockets and floors, and other features to cut down noise.

“A lot of science went into it, and we’re very excited about it,” said Brad Thress, Textron Aviation VP of engineering.

The aircraft’s noise level is the same as that inside a Textron Aviation office, he said.

A ride inside the Longitude test aircraft demonstrated how quiet. Conversation taking place in the forward zone of the aircraft was audible in the aft section of the aircraft.

Five Longitudes are in flight test and the first production aircraft is off the production line. Units through number 14 are in some stage of production line flow.

Longitude test aircraft have completed more than 600 flights and have logged more than 1,200 flight hours, Thress said.

The Longitude is being built inside a former Beechcraft facility, Plant IV, in east Wichita. It’s the first time that a Cessna jet has come down a former Beechcraft production line. Beechcraft ceased jet production during its bankruptcy before it sold to Cessna’s parent company, Textron, in 2014.

Textron Aviation has reorganized and improved Plant IV. And it has invested in the manufacturing processes of the Longitude, including using large, monolithic structures to reduce the number of parts, weight and production time.

It has designed vertical tooling so mechanics stand and work at chest height when they assemble the aircraft. Robots, rather than the mechanics, drill holes for fasteners.

“We really feel good about how the Longitude is progressing,” Ernest said.

The aircraft is powered by two HTF7000 engines and has a range of 3,500 nm with four passengers and maximum cruise of 476 kt.

Certification is expected by the end of 2017 or in early 2018.

Along with the Longitude, Textron Aviation is developing the Cessna Denali single-engine turboprop, the Citation Hemisphere large jet and the Scorpion military aircraft. All three aircraft are in new markets for the company.

“Those are all spaces we don’t compete in,” Ernest said.

—Molly McMillin

Textron Delivers First Hawker 400XPR

Textron Aviation (Booth N3530 and Static Display 36) has delivered its first fully configured Hawker 400XPR. The aircraft, which is owned by a Seattle-based company, was upgraded at Textron’s Wichita Service Center with new winglets, Williams International FJ-44 engines, a refurbished interior and a new paint scheme.

It is joining the operator’s corporate fleet that supports seaport operations around the world. On the Hawker 400XPR program, customers have been able to choose among upgrade elements, which the company has been certifying one at a time. Certifications were completed in late 2016.
JetNet IQ’s Cardarelli: The Pre-Owned Market Is Starting to Move Again

The market for pre-owned business jets is starting to loosen up and aircraft are beginning to move, says Paul Cardarelli, JetNet IQ VP of sales. At the same time, utilization is up, although prices remain challenging. And new business jet orders remain flat.

The number of transactions for pre-owned business aircraft totaled about 160 in August, up from about 150 a year ago. “This market is starting to move again,” Cardarelli said.

About 10.3% of the business jet fleet is for sale — about 2,500 aircraft — down from a high of 18% in the midst of the recession. About half of the aircraft for sale are 20 years old or more.

The business jet fleet in the U.S. totals about 13,000, up from about 7,000 aircraft in 2003. While there are now twice as many aircraft flying compared with 10 years ago, the total number of flight hours are the same.

“We need to operate our aircraft more often,” Cardarelli said.

Respondents to a survey of 500 business jet operators said factors driving lower residual values of pre-owned aircraft include overproduction of aircraft, too many models, deep discounting of new aircraft, rapid changes in technology and the cost to make upgrades based on regulatory requirements, said Rolland Vincent, JetNet IQ creator and director.

Survey respondents say they have enough aircraft in their hangars right now. Vincent said. Owners and operators tend not to retire their business jets until they’re about 30 years old. Manufacturers are producing too many aircraft, and there are too many aircraft models, he continued. Operators’ level of optimism about the market has risen, however. In the operator survey, 49% say we are past the low point in business jet demand, 27% say we are at the low point, and 24% say we haven’t reached the low point. Vincent said.

JetNet IQ is forecasting demand for 7,700 new business jets over the next 10 years, beginning in 2017.

“We do see a little bit of a lull we’re in,” Vincent said. —Molly McMillin

Gulfstream Delivers 550th G550

Gulfstream Aerospace Corp. (Booth N5132 and Static Display) has delivered its 550th Gulfstream G550. “This milestone delivery affirms the continued demand for the G550, one of the most dependable and sought-after aircraft in the world today,” said Gulfstream President Mark Burns. “The G550’s best-in-class range and payload have earned it a lasting reputation as a versatile aircraft for business aviation and an ideal platform for special missions.” Powered by two robust Rolls-Royce BR710 C4-11 engines, the G550 can carry up to 19 passengers between the world’s business capitals and can fly eight passengers and four crew 6,750 nm/12,501 km nonstop.

Thales Adds CRS Jet Spares for Challengers

Thales (Booth N5508) has selected CRS Jet Spares as its distributor for the Thales DC Generator. The three-stage brushless generator is original equipment on all Bombardier Challenger 300 and 350 model airframes. Terms of the agreement allow CRS to provide sales, service and technical support to the aftermarket for this generator with total OEM backing to better serve Challenger operators. CRS (Booth N2704) will increase stock levels for its exchange program and make units available for spares provisioning as well. The scope of this joint support for this generator looks to maintain and increase dispatch reliability for operators.

Air Culinaire Launches Crew Meal App

The Air Culinaire Worldwide Crew Meals app is now available for business aviation clients via iPhones and Android smartphones. Flight crews can order meals at the click of a button through any of Air Culinaire’s owned-and-operated U.S. kitchen locations. The app offers a low-cost, fixed menu; crew meal items are limited to breakfast, lunch, dinner and beverages, and may not be customized. Orders placed through the app cost significantly less than orders placed via phone or email. FBO delivery locations and hours are listed within the app. Delivery fees are a fixed rate of $5, nationwide. Booth C10431.

FSI to Install Third G280 Sim in Savannah

FlightSafety International (Booth N5116) will install its third full-flight simulator for the Gulfstream G280 at its Learning Center in Savannah, Georgia. The simulator is scheduled to enter service in March 2018. The first two simulators for the Gulfstream G280 are located at FlightSafety’s Learning Center in Dallas, Texas. The G280 simulator will be equipped with a FlightSafety CrewView collimated glass mirror display. “This innovative new display will provide Gulfstream G280 pilots with an enhanced training experience that contributes to the realism FlightSafety’s FS1000 simulators deliver,” said David Davenport, executive vice president, commercial.

FAA Approves Concorde Battery for Mustang

Concorde Battery Corp. has received FAA approval for its RG-390E/30 lead-acid battery to be installed on the Cessna 510 Mustang. The STC replaces the original equipment battery with a 30-ampere-hour drop in replacement that is 5 lb. lighter. Concorde (Booth N3017) claims that direct replacement of the original equipment battery with the RG-390E/30 offers benefits of prolonged service life and extended maintenance intervals as a result of enhanced plate design and a proprietary PolyGuard separator system. High cyclic operations, which are susceptible to early battery wear-out, will realize longer life as a result of the technology used in the RG-390E/30.
How does MedAire’s safety solutions for business and commercial aviation and yacht owners divide among them?

Dolny: Our airline and maritime customers each represent about 25%, while business aviation contributes half. The Americas are our biggest market by far, followed by Europe, Asia and the Middle East. That said, we’re growing geographically, in services and in volume. When I joined, we were handling 50,000 cases a year. In 2016, we handled 225,000 – more than 600 calls daily. To accommodate, we’ve added new capabilities and opened call centers in Beijing and Frankfurt in addition to Phoenix, and they’re staffed 24/7 by more than 50 emergency room doctors overall. The focus has changed, as well; we aren’t just handling inflight medical emergencies. While we do see many business aviation calls for such incidents, we get more calls for preflight security assistance and from customers at destinations with medical concerns.

How do you handle security matters?

Dolny: We conduct aviation security assessments for clients around the globe in partnership with International SOS, of which we’re a subsidiary. MedAire has established aviation-specific security teams in Phoenix and Philadelphia. And through International SOS we have a global network of more than 200 regional and local security professionals that we utilize as needed. For the past decade, we’ve partnered with Control Risks, the leading global risk consultancy. MedAire relates risks specifically to aviation, focusing on airspace, the airport and risks to operators. We offer 24/7 access to aviation security experts, and provide security briefs and airspace assessments before customers travel. And should they find themselves in a critical medical or physical situation during the trip, we will get them back home by whatever means are appropriate.

What new services are available?

Dolny: We are evolving and expanding our services. For instance, we’ve moved our Phoenix MedLink call center into a brand-new ER with much enhanced equipment and a more prominent location. Also, we’re doing teleconsultations in 13 cities in three countries where that is allowed. With this capability, patients can have face-to-face time via phone or computer with a doctor who can then prescribe medications remotely. It’s wonderfully effective with mild cases when a physical exam is unnecessary. If they need to see a doctor or go to an ER, we’ll help with that, too. And we’re now providing emotional support and stress consultation services. Some customers were witnesses to the terrorist activities in Paris and Brussels and required it. We’ve added these services to help them after these extremely challenging events.

You’re not all talk; you sell equipment, as well.

Dolny: We have a variety of equipment for carriage aboard aircraft to help assess or stabilize a medical situation. This includes first-aid and pediatric kits, AEDs and a multi-parameter medical monitor to be used by non-medically trained personnel to transmit ECGs among other items such as glucometry and blood pressure. We’re always modifying this equipment to keep up with what’s happening in the world. A key part of reducing risk is to ensure our customers have the right equipment with them. We have fulfillment centers all over the world, so aircraft can restock their kits before the next flight. We also offer a variety of medical training programs for crews and conduct safety sessions in hangars, our offices, at FlightSafety International centers and online. We have new first responder training for executives to help them manage medical or security events while traveling, and we explain what to avoid so they don’t become emergencies later.

Are many calls critical in nature?

Dolby: Statistically, most are not at all sensational but rather involve things like fainting, vomiting or sinus-type issues. Still, we do get serious emergencies. Not long ago, a commercial flight called about a passenger with severe eye distress. He hadn’t disclosed that he’d recently had surgery, and once in flight his eye began expanding by 25% and he was in danger of actually losing his sight. We advised that they land, and they did. That was an exceptional situation; however, cases of suspect heart attacks and strokes occur virtually every single day.
A prototype of the Stratos jet was on display at Oshkosh this year after a four- or five-year hiatus there. You’ve been quietly making progress on the aircraft’s development and are in the midst of a flight-test program. The aircraft completed the first phase of flight testing in May. What now?

“We are really early in the flight program. We need to do a lot more flights to test the flight envelope. The next step is to explore the flight envelope and take it to its full height and full speeds. We may find some things to refine or improve.”

The company’s goal was to design an aircraft to bridge the performance gap between very light jets and full-size business jets. The Stratos jet was designed to achieve cruise speeds of more than 400 kt., with a 1,500-nm range and 41,000-ft. maximum altitude. Has anything changed?

“We’re sticking to them [the performance figures]. We’ve got the right thing. We are extremely pleased with the progress we’ve made up to this point. We haven’t encountered anything that would require a major change in the design…. Right now, we haven’t flown above 18,000 ft. We need to be IFR certified. We need to be RSVM capable. That’s the big step. Then we can fly at 41,000 ft.”

You came to your first AirVenture Oshkosh with nothing more than an early 3-D printed model. It broke at the show. The next time, you had a model at a small booth and were “pretty much ignored.” Three years later, you came with a cabin and had about 50 people sit in it. From that, you made a fiberglass cabin.

“That got some attention, but people were still doubting. But that helped us to get enough financing from investors that we were taken to the next step. At that time, we decided to go completely quiet. We made no announcement; we didn’t change our website. But we had the money. We didn’t have to do anything but work. As soon as we made the first flight, we had a press release. We changed the website.”

You now have enough investment from private investors for an additional prototype and to finish flight testing, but you need more investment to take the program through certification. What do you still need?

“We’re not pushing. We wanted to first show the numbers are there and the airplane really flies. Then we talk about getting more money. We expect to be in the range of $200 million, but again that’s not sure. That could even be more.”

You have not set a price. And you’re not taking orders until you are closer to certification. Why is that?

“There is no point at this stage. If you take an order, you make a commitment by way of debt or price or something. [Then you can become] stuck to deliver planes at a loss.”

How is the market?

“That’s what is very encouraging. We see a lot of lower turboprop owners all looking at it. There is no reason why it should be more expensive than a turboprop of the same size and the same weight. It may even be cheaper and it has better performance. Then you have people who want to upgrade. If you go to a jet, you want jet performance.”

Your Redmond facility is more than a design center. How so?

“Everything we do is aimed at production from a facilities point of view. We have substantial facilities. We have a machine shop. We have a water jet cutter, a five-axis CNC machine. We are extremely well equipped. We are now building a composite shop so we have everything in-house, which is quite unique for a start-up.”

Are you considering offering the aircraft as a kit?

“It’s possible. We haven’t made a decision yet. It might depend on the time it takes to get the financing for the certification…. It would be a very interesting kit, if you asked me. People have shown interest. We’ll see. Our goal is certification” —Molly McMillin
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