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## DAILY NEWS

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ISSUE 2 NOVEMBER 17, 2008

# THAT'S SHOW BUSINESS!

## KUWAIT LEGACY

Kuwait charter operator ASAG Aviation has ordered two Embraer Legacy 500 mid-size jets. The first aircraft will be delivered in 2013 to the company which is a subsidiary of the Al Shabab Group. One aircraft is for the private travel needs of the organization while the other will be for on-demand charter operations. The deal is worth \$73 million.

The MEBA show kicked off with record orders and numbers yesterday with the first day of the show already matching 2007 event in terms of deals.

The big news came from Abu Dhabi's Al Jaber Group (stand 415) which announced the creation of AIA, its new VIP charter company with an investment worth \$1.2bn. Chief executive Mohammed Al Jaber revealed the company has ordered a fleet of Airbus and Embraer VIP aircraft.

This investment includes four Airbus A319 XLR jets and two Airbus Corporate Jetliners from the European manufacturer and eight of the new Legacy 450/500s to go alongside the five Lineage

1000 jetliners and two Legacy 600 aircraft that Al Jaber ordered from the Brazilian manufacturer at the Dubai Airshow last year. The company is the launch customer for the Lineage 1000 with the first due to be delivered by the end of the year.

Al Jaber says: "The breathtaking economic growth over the past decade in the Middle East has created a sizeable business aviation market. The regional VIP market is expected to be worth about \$1.2 billion by 2010 and grow at a rate of 25% per year." He adds that the company intends to be one of the market leaders in the region.

Operations start in February with orders timed

for delivery over the next five years. AIA's first base will be in Abu Dhabi, followed later by a facility in Dubai.

Hinting at AIA's future director Al Jaber says: "Central to our business plan is having a base in each of the UAE's international cities."

Chief operating officer Dr Mark Piretti adds: "AIA will offer a suite of complementary services and facilities that will see the UAE become a global hub for VIP aviation."

The Airbus order makes AIA the largest single customer for the Airbus A319 family in the Middle East, says Francois Chaudin, Airbus vice president, Corporate Jets.

## Sovereign continues to reign supreme



Crosta announced yesterday that it has delivered a Citation Sovereign to Abu Dhabi-based Prestige Jet and received a separate order for the aircraft from Jordan's Arab Wings.

Prestige Jet's Sovereign is its second and Crosta says the company is evaluating the possibility of a third.

Arab Wings' aircraft is set for delivery in the second half of 2009. General manager Ahmad Abu Ghazaleh was at the show to sign the deal with Crosta.

"With the addition of a mid-size

Citation Sovereign and C21+ light jet, we are adding capacity at both ends of our fleet, and have chosen aircraft that are tried and tested in the region's demanding conditions," he says.

Crosta's vice president International sales Trevor Edling adds: "Arab Wings was the first to articulate a clear vision of the potential of business aviation in the Middle East. We are very pleased to continue playing a role in the company's successful expansion." Abu Ghazaleh is pictured above with Edling.



Muhammad Al Jaber - a blockbuster deal

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# AVIATION INDUSTRY MUST FACE ITS PEOPLE CHALLENGE - MINISTER

The aviation industry must address its shrinking human resources base, according to UAE Minister of the Economy and chairman of the General Civil Aviation Authority HE Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansouri.

Before officially opening MEBA 2008, the Minister warned that while the industry continues to expand, the human resources base is diminishing.

"While I am most confident of continued growth, I urge the business aviation community to be aware of the fact that the current pool of aviation human resources will shrink. This is a significant challenge and may impact growth," he says.

However, the Minister remained upbeat about the state of the industry in the UAE and the wider Middle East.

He says that while the current global climate may impact executive air travel, the shifting of the aviation community leadership to the Middle East, coupled with unique business, commercial and economic dynamics and demand for air travel, would provide financial immunity to the regional aerospace sector. Al Mansouri pointed to the continued growth in the business aviation sector in the Middle East, growth reflected in the expansion of MEBA from 90 exhibitors and 31 aircraft at the inaugural event to 250 exhibitors and 75 aircraft at this year's show.

"These are interesting figures, especially at this time and especially in the aviation business," he says. "I am very optimistic and these figures give us some optimism in the current dark situation in the world economy."

He adds that where, 20 years ago, business aircraft tended to be regarded as "corporate status symbols" they were now seen as

essential business tools.

"Aircraft ownership is no longer a prerequisite for their use," he says. "You have chartering, leasing and fractional ownership."

He believes the "open skies" policy of the UAE, combined with the country's massive investment in aviation-related infrastructure, has delivered "many benefits" to business aviation and provided a platform for it to grow further.

"The Middle East in general, and the Gulf States in particular, resemble a healthy market for business aviation aircraft."



HE Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansouri

## Royal Jet defies market downturn



Shane O'Hare

Abu Dhabi-based charter company Royal Jet is bullish about the current local market and confident that operators will ride out the economic downturn.

Speaking at the show president Shane O'Hare says: "The fact that the number of exhibitors has grown by 175 per cent demonstrates that there is strong interest in the Middle Eastern market."

He adds that Royal Jet is about to embark on a period of significant growth saying: "We intend to take advantage by forging ahead with our plans to open more bases in the Middle East and will make more detailed announcements in the coming weeks."

According to O'Hare, Royal Jet has been mainly unaffected by current conditions thanks to its strategy of diversification, in addition to its charter services the

company offers management and acquisition, medevac, maintenance, repair and overhaul and fixed base operations facilities at Abu Dhabi, which it is about to expand.

O'Hare also acknowledges the potentially strong influence of the new private aviation facility to be opened at Al Bateen.

O'Hare points out that Royal Jet concentrates on high net worth individuals and fleet aircraft at the higher end, such as Gulfstreams and BBJs. With five of the type on its books, the company has the largest fleet of BBJs in the world.

The company's plan is on target to operate 20 aircraft by 2012 and 50 by 2020, predominantly VIP and super mid-size types, O'Hare says. "We have one of the healthiest balance sheets in the industry and strong liquidity as a company."

## Booked for success

The first ever annual review from MEBA - the professional association behind the MEBA show - has been published in time for this event.

The book, packed with information and photographs about business aviation through the region, was distributed to members and exhibitors yesterday.

"It is a fantastic piece of work," says MEBA chairman Ali Al Naqbi. "We will be using it when we meet people to talk about MEBA and our members."

The book was produced by The Times Group of the UK and extra copies are available from stand 923.

The company also announced yesterday that it is to launch a new publication. Called Arabian Aerospace, the magazine will cover the whole industry for the Middle East and North Africa, with a particular focus on business aviation. The first issue will appear in May.

## NetJets plays its winning card

NetJets Middle East (stand 215) launched at the new club membership card at MEBA.

Called the XV Club Jet Card the offering allows individuals and companies a new way to benefit from all the advantages of owning a private jet - 25 hours at a time. The card guarantees access to the NetJets' worldwide fleet without any long commitment and allows the holder 25 hours of "occupied" flight time per year.

Chadi Saade, managing director sales & marketing says: "Club members will enjoy the highest standard for safety and premium service. Travelling for business or leisure, we make their journey a pleasurable experience every time."

"We have solved a problem for many individuals for whom time is their most valuable commodity. Club owners can easily conduct business in two, three, even four different cities in one day and still be home in time to have dinner. They can also spontaneously take family and friends away on a weekend trip."

## Licensed to thrill...

Ocean Sky Aviation (stand 632) hit the headlines this year as the provider of private jets to the latest James Bond film Quantum of Solace.

Ocean Sky loaned five of its jets to Eon Productions, which were used to fly the cast and crew to Panama for a week. In return, the company featured eight times in the film.

Managing director Niki Rokni says: "The Bond deal

has put us on the global map. Now people are calling from all over the world."

The London-based aircraft charter and management company is one of Europe's fastest growing operators and is involved in many sectors of the market. According to Rokni, Ocean Sky is at the show partly to look for a Middle East base.

The company is also developing its completion expertise and recently acquired British interiors specialist Alan Dean Interiors.

Rokni is in charge of branding and designed the interior for the company's latest Challenger 650. "Branding is very important to us. We are known as providing high quality services," she says.

In addition to developing a consistent interior theme throughout its



aircraft, the company has also commissioned designer Andrew Winch to

work on its Boeing Business Jet, due to be delivered in May 2011.

# FLIGHT DAILY NEWS

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## AVJET Routing plans Khartoum FBO

Khartoum will be the fifth location for Fixed Base Operations (FBO) specialist AVJET Routing (stand 743), it was announced at MEDA yesterday.

Revealing the decision, chief executive Sam Samir Wari said: "The facility will be the first of its kind in that region of Africa and it will offer a full range of services, including fueling and catering support, flight planning and NOTAMS."

The Khartoum office will be added to the Shaphi-headquartered company's offices in Geneva, Damascus, Tripoli and Istanbul, as well as its world-wide representative network. AVJET Routing handles all types of aircraft, from the light end through to Boeing 757-200s.

Wari says that while traffic growth through Khartoum was growing, administration issues in the region required specialist knowledge.

"We have a lot of experience in some of the more obscure African countries," he says. "It is not like coming to the UAE. There are a lot of issues you need to be consider. We think our customers will appreciate having somebody who can remove their worries on all these issues."

## Embraer service boost for FAS

Falcon Aviation Services (FAS) is to become the first authorised service centre for Embraer (stand 32) executive aircraft in the Middle East.

Luis Carlos Alfonso, Embraer executive vice president and chief executive jets says: "In our endeavour to expand our service centre network to the region we looked for expertise and reputation to pass on to our customers. In FAS we have the ideal partner."

Abu Dhabi-based FAS (stand 30) has also signed an order for two Legacy 500 jets valued at \$36.8 million and scheduled for delivery in the first quarter of 2014, bringing its fleet of Embraer jets to 11. FAS also operates several helicopters and a Gulfstream G450.

TAG is set to prove its Global Express XRS is poles apart from other aircraft.

The TAG TransPolar08 Global Express XRS will attempt to set a record for flying round the world over both the North and South poles with TAG Group vice president Aziz Ojeh at the controls.

Setting records is not a new experience for Ojeh. In July 1984 he chafed up the fastest eastbound flight around the world in a Bombardier Challenger 601, with a time of 49 hours and 27 minutes and an average speed of 411kt.

"I've been waiting since 1984 for the right business aircraft to beat the polar record," he says.

The current world best was set by Pan Am Flight 30 in October 1977 using a Boeing 747SP. The aircraft managed an average speed of 423kt and completed the flight in 54 hours 7 minutes and 12 seconds, flying from San Francisco with stopovers at London Heathrow, Cape Town International and Auckland airports.

"In our calculations we can achieve an average of 440kt," claims Ojeh. Although the exact departure date has yet to be confirmed, Ojeh says: "The best time will be between MEDA and the end of November."

He is also keeping the route close to his chest but says the

# Ojeh warming up for his polar record bid



TAG's Aziz Ojeh left and Diego Ulrich and the TransPolar08 Global Express

record attempt will start and finish at TAG Farnborough Airport in the UK.

The aircraft will be five pilots on board, who will all play a part. "The Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) – the world governing body for air sports – states that I have to be the pilot in

command for the first and last legs," explains Ojeh.

One of the crucial elements is turn-around time on the ground. "We have allowed 48 minutes in our calculations," says Ojeh. But, in reality, he thinks it will be possible to do it quicker.

Brandon O'Reilly, chief

executive TAG Farnborough Airport, says: "From touch-down to take-off at Farnborough we have managed it in 33min."

Emil St Hilarie, vice president business development for business aviation services supplier ACASS adds: "The gauntlet has been thrown down to the other

FBOs to beat that time."

Ojeh explains that planning for the record bid started in August. It had originally been suggested to do it to coincide with the 25th anniversary of his other record-breaking flight. "But I couldn't wait that long," he smiles

## ARINC Direct offers a helping hand as economy bites

The globe's economic misadventures are ARINC's opportunity, according to Alexis Smith, Middle East sales director for network solutions for the US-based aviation IT and communications provider (stand 330).

"The global downturn is having an effect here," she says. "It may not hit the Middle East as deeply as elsewhere, but people in the region are certainly looking seriously at the efficiencies and economies our services can offer. Only a year ago saving money wasn't a high priority for Middle Eastern operators – now it is."

Services offered to flight departments wanting to manage their operations more efficiently under the ARINC Direct brand include cockpit datalink, passenger communications, flight planning and the AvioNet ground-messaging network.

ARINC Direct cockpit datalink services are supported by both VHF radio and the Inmarsat L-band satcoms installed in most top-end business jets. "They give pilots ready access to things like current weather information and NOTAMS, link them directly with their own operations centres, and support automatic position reporting for flight-following purposes," says Smith.



Alexis Smith – looking at efficiencies

The company supports passenger voice and data communications via the Inmarsat and Iridium satellite systems and its own SKYLINK Ku-band network. Iridium's low-data service can support messaging and e-mail. Inmarsat's new SwiftBroadband offering is noted as up to

403kbit/sec per channel and is used for Internet and private network access, large file transfers and videoconferencing. SKYLINK is in use aboard 80 large-cabin Gulfstreams and supports data rates in the megabit range.

"One person could manage an aircraft operation using our flight support services," says Smith.

A comprehensive suite of Web-based tools, complemented by a 24x7 support centre, provides flight planning, graphical flight-following, weather information, access to air traffic management systems, reduced vertical separation monitoring (RVSM), contract fuel services and international trip support.

The AvioNet secure ground network was originally created for use by airline administrative and operations staff and is now also available to corporate/VIP operators. "It meets the International Air Transport Association standard for mission-critical ground messaging for applications such as diplomatic and over-flight clearances," says Smith. "AvioNet messages are time-stamped and delivery is guaranteed." In AvioNet Mail Web-enabled form it can be integrated with standard office e-mail tools like Outlook.



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## Prestige turns its sights on Europe

Prestige Jet (Istanbul ETO) is steering through MECA and yesterday claimed it would become the first Arabian operator to Europe, as well as the first multi-base private jet operator in the Middle East.

The Abu Dhabi-based company has announced the creation of Prestige Holdings to control Prestige Jet and five other business aviation-related subsidiaries.

It also announced the development of three fixed base operations (FBOs) in Qatar, Jordan and Bahrain, as well as the receipt of its Qatari Air Operator's Certificate (AOC).

### REBRAND

Additionally, it revealed it has bought Spanish operator Flyfish Express Aviation Management, which has been rebranded as Prestige Jet Spain.

"I am pleased to say that Prestige Jet remains on track with its stated strategy and objectives," says Rina Escudézar de Ghazit, chairman Prestige Holdings.

"Our annual and solid business plan allowed us to spend our wings faster and wider than we first planned. More importantly, we have proven that, as a network, we can effectively compete in today's increasingly challenging market by providing the best possible service."

The Spanish consortium gave Prestige access to a European operator's certificate. Vice chairman Fays Dakh says: "Being an Arabian operator meant we had to gain all the permits and permissions for flights into Europe. But now that we have a European operator we can leave at an hour and a half's notice from the Middle East for Europe."

He continues: "The acquisition of the company allows us to effectively meet our fast-growing customer demand with a company in Europe. It allows us to offer a network of major Spanish and European air brokers. It also gives us an ideal position to continue our rapid expansion and registration on a home market opportunity. We intend to take full advantage of this launch pad."



Saad Wallan is optimistic about the prospects that having the region's only Garuda service facility will bring

## Citation Service Centre boost for Wallan

Rawal, Arabia's Wallan Aviation (Istanbul) - Garuda's long-term sales representative in the region - has been named an Authorized Citation Service Centre for the Middle East, covering all 500-series Citations.

This is the first of its kind in the region and Tamer Baling, Garuda's vice president international sales says: "We've wanted the service centre here for a while but, until now, it hasn't been economically viable. With the fast growth in the region it made sense."

Mark Pichon, Garuda senior vice president, customer service adds: "Captain Saad Wallan brings considerable Citation expertise to our service network and will be a key partner in this very important region. Our Luffhansa customers now have access to local service from a top aviation company."

Wallan Aviation chairman Saad Wallan is optimistic that the facility will help

boost sales prospects.

"We have seen the need for aircraft service here and now customers don't have to fly to Europe or Singapore for maintenance," he says. "We are looking to add further assets to our maintenance infrastructure and expect to be able to cover the full range of Citations within a year. As soon as we get the equipment, we'll add them."

Wallan says he is also planning to open another maintenance facility "somewhere in the UAE".

For Wallan the added bonus of being an authorized service centre is the extra service he can offer to prospective purchasers. "Typically it will be a good selling point," he says.

Wallan is also upbeat about his sales in the region. "Around 90% are cash and 100% in Saudi Arabia are cash. The whole issue of credit is a new concept here."

## Lufthansa Technik braces for global turbulence

While rejoicing at the success of the second MECA show, Wallan (Istanbul) makes it plain that not even the Middle East is immune from the effects of the global economic downturn.

"Broadly speaking, it's having less impact on us here than in other regions," says Hensch, senior vice president of sales and marketing for VIP completions and maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) specialist Lufthansa Technik (LHT).

"There has been very little effect on our wide-body completions business, though other providers have seen a 747 contract cancelled by a customer base outside this region," he says. "But our MRO business for the dedicated business jets are beginning to feel the chill, with revenue deferring, delays and even parking their aircraft."

Hensch believes that with its breadth of service offerings and conservative approach to adding capacity, his company is in good shape to weather the storm.

"Everything depends on how hard the wind blows and how deep the snow gets," he says. "But after every winter there's a spring, and we will be well placed to enjoy it."

Over the years the company has completed several mergers in size up to the Boeing 747-400. Now a new generation of wide-body types is tempting operators who can afford the very best.



Walter Hensch: "There has been very little effect on our wide-body completions"

and its other work is feeling the benefit.

"In this region we have a signed contract for completion of an Airbus A330 and pre-contract commitments for three Boeing 747-400," says Hensch. "We're also in discussions for an Airbus wide-body, further 747-400 and for 767s."

The company is also doing well outside the Middle East, having recently chalked up commitments for 767s and an Airbus-engined Boeing 787, and it is negotiating on a number of Airbus and

Boeing wide-bodies.

"The Middle East has traditionally been strong for us in wide-body completions - it will remain so and it will even grow," comments Hensch. "But we also expect to see some growth in other markets, such as China and Russia."

Besides his direct Lufthansa Technik responsibilities, Hensch is also a board member of show organizer the Middle East Business Aviation Association. "This year's event, with 4,000 registered participants and around

130 companies present, represents tremendous growth in the last 12 months," he says. "Growth is manifesting around the world in different regions and sectors, causing a dilution in the market. But if a shake-out happens, I'm confident that MEBA will be one of those left standing."

In other Lufthansa Technik services, subsidiary Lufthansa Technik Aviation Services (LHAS) launched its Maintenance Plus customer loyalty programme last prototype.

Berlin-based LHAS specializes in Bombardier Global, Challenger and Learjet MRO. Customers will earn points based on turnover, outstanding payments relative to sales, and their contractual relationship with LHAS. Points will be redeemable into special aircraft on-ground (AOG) support and customized maintenance contracts.

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 **JET AVIATION**

## SCHOOL FOR SATCOMS IS GREAT DANCES' IDEA

With the choice of connectivity services on offer to the business/VIP aviation community now wider than ever, Danish solutions provider Satcom1 (stand 721) plans to help current and potential customers make their minds up at an event scheduled for the day after the show ends.

The company will host a day-long seminar at the Sheraton Jumeirah Beach on Wednesday. Starting at 9.30am and free to registered delegates, the syllabus will cover the pros and cons of the Inmarsat, Iridium and Ku-band satellite systems, on-board cellphone via Session Initiated Protocol (SIP) and Unmanned Mobile Access (UMA) technology, billing systems, optimisation of links for Internet access and e-mail, and much more.

There will also be a live demonstration of Satcom1's cellphone solution for corporate fleet/VIP aircraft, and representatives of Inmarsat avionics manufacturers Thruair & Thruair, Chelton and DMS Satcom, will present their product portfolios.

Here at the show Satcom1 is featuring its AvioIP software, designed to support a wide variety of applications via the Inmarsat and other satcoms systems aboard the aircraft. Running on the JetLAN AR250 router from NAT Seattle of the USA, AvioIP is compatible with Inmarsat's AC2044 (two SwiftBroadband service, which is due to achieve world wide coverage next year.

Satcom1 recently project-managed the world's first full-capacity SwiftBroadband installation in a Middle East-based aircraft. The work was carried out in partnership with Almar Aerospace of Dubai.

AvioIP also facilitates video conferencing, BlackBerry email, on-board cellphone through a BlackBerry UMA device or a Nokia SIP phone, data acceleration and passenger billing.

# Avinode oils the wheels of charter market

Looking for the best price for a bizjet charter? Go no further than stand 200, where

Suedish-based Avinode is demonstrating its expertise as the provider of the world's largest online business-to-business marketplace for buying and selling charter flights.

"Our aim is to increase the charter industry's bookings and client base," says chief executive Niclas Wennersten. "We provide the necessary technology, tools and content, yielding a win-win for our community."

With a database of 2,600 aircraft and more than 900 member companies, Avinode offers operators and brokers real-time information on availability and pricing, managing requests and responses with an entirely electronic workflow. The system covers 65 countries on six continents and is used by an average of 4,000 people daily to charter aircraft ranging from turboprops to HJs.

Around 60,000 requests are handled every month, and 3,000 empty legs are listed at any given time.

Created in 2001, the company now claims

a 70 per cent share of its market across Europe, Russia and the Middle East.

Participating companies in this region include ExecuJet Middle East, Royal Jet, Empire Aviation Group, Chapman Freeborn and International Air Charter.

Specific Avinode products and services include the charter planner, a Web-based aircraft scheduling and quotation system; three different membership types (standby, premium and corporate); pending trip tracking of charter requests and responses; and monthly statistics plus enhanced business intelligence advanced and tailor-made reports.

Avinode is sharing its 112-square-metre stand - it's the second-largest at the show - with eight member companies: Air Independence (Germany), Air Lazar (Bulgaria), Arkas Aviation (Turkey), Capital Jets (Russia), ExcelAire (USA), Rayjet (Jordan), Omni Aviacos Technology (Portugal) and Twilight Aircraft (UK).

Avinode will host the first annual MEBA Champagne Mingle at its stand at 4.00pm today.



Nina Berthelsson - demonstrating expertise

## Guru knows the secret of safe flight ops

Safety is the top priority of Swedish company Flygprestanda (stand 1021), which specialises in the support of take-off and landing calculations.

It's here to promote its Guru software for business aviation, which allows crews to carry with them everything they need to plan their way into and out of around 4,000 airports world-wide.

"MEBA is an excellent opportunity for us to meet our existing clients in the region," says sales and marketing vice president Jonas Persson. "And experience shows that new prospects tend to contact us at shows like this, where we can demonstrate our services and meet potential clients in person."

Users of Guru can carry the Flygprestanda and the latest version of the airport database with them on a smartphone, personal digital assistant or



Jonas Persson, the world at his fingertips

laptop wherever they go. This allows them to calculate maximum take-off and landing distances under every possible combination of

aircraft weight and balance, weather and airport surface conditions.

The same capability is available via the Web. Users

with connectivity can access the company's portal, carry out their calculations and download the results as a table in PDF format.

The airport database is derived from the Aeronautical Information Publications (AIPs) produced by national civil aviation authorities. Clients currently receive updates by Internet every 28 days, a frequency driven by the Aeronautical Information Regulation and Control (AIRAC) cycle. "But we are working on a system for on-demand updates and plan to introduce it in the near future," says Persson.

After 40 years of success with performance calculation services, Flygprestanda is now close to introducing a new product line in the form of flight operations control system (FOCS), a complete system for flight preparation and planning. This is currently in beta test with launch customers for introduction soon, according to Persson.



Lektro's towless towbar is here in the capable hands of Stephen Sipe

## The best towing trucker... bar none

Already having made a huge impact in the US and Europe, Lektro (stand 641) is showcasing its latest towless aircraft tow trucker (TLTV) to the Middle East market.

"We were the first company to introduce the towless vehicle and we improve on them at the time," says marketing director Stephen Sipe.

"What makes this new trucker special is that it is battery operated. The powerful zero emissions electric motor runs clean and quiet, so future air and noise pollution are not a

concern. A battery can last for at least 16 hours over a period of two heavy shifts."

The new TLTV is easier and a lot safer for operators to use as they don't have to handle the heavy towbars.

"It is safer for the aircraft, too, as the vehicle is much gentler. We have got rid of the antiquated towbar and replaced it with a patented universal cradle that quickly and gently adapts to nearly every aircraft on the market," says Sipe. "A built-in winch gently pulls the aircraft into the

handle and cradles the aircraft nose gear at the front of the tug."

This gives the operator unprecedented manoeuvrability, maximising hangar stacking capabilities.

Lektro's customers include general and corporate aviation, regional airlines, and military and government in the US and many other countries. "In the US we have more regional airline business than anyone else. We're at MEBA to show the Middle East market our capabilities with this revolutionary towing trucker," says Sipe.

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Gulfstream strong on Gulf ramps and right, Larry Flynn



Gulfstream is bullish about the long-term market for its products, despite the problems of the global economy.

Sales and marketing senior vice president Larry Flynn says: "We have lucked out to 2017 – a much stronger situation than when we went into the last downturn."

There are further good reasons for morale to stay high at the Savannah-based blazer manufacturer, according to Flynn.

"We've seen only one order cancelled this year and a couple last year," he says. "They'll figure out a way to get them. We're still taking a lot of orders, though the pace has slowed a little – this region is better than

## Bullish Gulfstream ready to ride out the storm

others in that respect."

The strength of Gulfstream's interest in the Middle East is evident in its presence on the static park. The company has a G150, a G200 and a G550 lined up among the 78 aircraft that have flown in specially for the show. Future displays at MEBA can be expected to feature the two new designs that the company announced this year – the top-of-the-line G650 and the super-midsize G250.

Featuring an innovative bonded-panel structure for

an ultra-smooth exterior, fly-by-wire, the high-speed, ultra-long-range G650 is due to fly in the second half of next year and to enter service in 2012. "There has been a tremendous market response to the G650," Flynn reports. "It's a whole new category of business aircraft, and we're confident that its \$60 million price tag means it won't impact sales of the G450 and G550."

The G250, with PlaneView integrated cockpit, reduced cabin altitude, in-flight

baggage access, brake-by-wire, and a wing modified on that of the large-cabin GV, is also set to fly before the end of next year, with certification and service entry to follow in 2011.

Development of the G250 and G650 is funded by the continuing success of the existing in-production family, comprising the mid-size G150 and G200 and large-cabin G450 and G550. In-service totals are 59 G150s, 197 G200s, 128 G450s and 195 G550s. Gulfstream chalked up a

total of 257 orders across the range last year and plans to deliver an estimated 159 aircraft this year. Not sales in the third quarter of this year were \$1.32 billion compared with \$1.32 billion in the same period last year.

This year has also seen the delivery of a Middle Eastern customer. "We remain very confident about our prospects here," says Flynn. "You have only to look at the number of aircraft on the ramp to know that there is significant long-

term interest in business/VIP aviation in this region."

Other Gulfstream news here includes the announcement of an in-flight entertainment system specially developed for installation in the manufacturer's aircraft. Created in conjunction with Washington State-based media network specialist Innovative Advantage, the Audio Video Distribution System (AVDS) supports the latest audio and video standards and offers increased bandwidth and better sound quality.

AVDS will be standard on the G650. From next year it will be an option on in-production G450s and G550s and as a retrofit for all in-service large-cabin Gulfstreams.

## New owners ramping up the 'pocket rocket'

Action Aviation (stan OD6 and static) is at the show with a shining example of the S130.

One of the S130s selling points is its speed. It is so fast in fact, that the S130 set a new speed record on its way to the show from the factory in San Antonio, Texas, USA. The light jet set a record on the London to Dubai leg in just 7h 7min with an average speed of 424kt (786km/h). Action Aviation's chairman Hamish Harding captained the aircraft and says: "Breaking records has become almost a habit with the S130. On this attempt ATC were very helpful and coming into Dubai cleared us in without a speed limit to help beat the record."

The flight had a single stop over in Istanbul lasting 45min to allow for refuelling.

And it seems the aircraft is on the way up. Although the aircraft has had a well-documented and frequently lumpy path through the development process, Action Aviation managing director Mike Creed is bullish about the aircraft's future.

"The factory now has very strong Dubai-based owners in Envest Aerospace and they're taking all the right things in ramping up production," he says.

"They're not going to just build 100 aircraft in six months. They have a philosophy of making sure they get it right. It's not like turning a light switch, it will take time and they are doing the right thing to deliver the product."

For Action Aviation that means the company can get back on track with sales and delivery of the jetset.



Action Aviation's Mike Creed

Creed says Envest hasn't yet announced the full pricing strategy but today the aircraft can be ordered for \$7.5m plus options to be available in mid-summer of 2009.

"The S130 is a pocket rocket. There is no other light jet that can match it for performance," says Creed.

Creed says: "The perceived recession isn't being seen. MEBA has expanded by two thirds since the last show. There are more than 80 aircraft on the static display. My bet would be to be here."

## Phenom price to rise – buy now

With Embraer's Phenom 100 closing in on certification, Luis Carlos Afonso, the Brazilian company's head of business aviation, is advising potential customers to order now. "The price of \$2.8m is a 2005 price and is valid until certification, then it will increase to \$3m. Now is the time to buy."

Afonso says the aircraft is now being designated as "entry level jet" rather than a Very Light Jet. "We think that this classification is confusing as it covers a whole range of aircraft from single engines. We see it as personal jets up to the Eclipse and then

entry level jets with larger cabins."

The Phenom 100 is expected to certify before the end of this month with ANAC – the Brazilian regulatory body – with the FAA certification following soon afterwards. Embraer says it will have first deliveries by the end of the year.

Phenom 100 has met all of its specifications for certification. "That is important. Fuel burn, weight and performance are all 100% correct," Afonso says. "The final element for the programme is the software for the flap control system."



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## Mustangs are let loose in Lebanon

Cessna (ODI) announced yesterday that it has delivered the first of two Citation Mustangs to Lebanese operator Open Sky Aviation.

Although the aircraft was delivered in September, Open Sky is expected to start commercial operations with the aircraft from Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport next month.

"For a pioneering business, we are delighted to have launched with a pioneering aircraft," says Haytham Azhar, Open Sky's chief executive. "Our strategy is to broaden the market for business aviation by offering a natural step up for travelers who presently fly scheduled across the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. With the Citation Mustang, we are able to offer business jet performance and comfort but at a price that is very attractive to many business and leisure travelers."

Trevor Edling, Cessna vice president for international sales says: "The Citation Mustang is proving a popular and successful choice with charter companies across the world. By offering, in a more compact package, the usual Citation virtues of performance, reliability and value, the Mustang has found favour with operators and passengers alike. We wish Open Sky Aviation great success and look forward to playing a role in its growth."

Open Sky Aviation will take delivery of its second Citation Mustang in June 2009.



Cessna's entry level jet the Citation Mustang

## Columbus sales into the Middle East

Cessna has announced that 10 per cent of the Citation Columbus orders it has received are for the Middle East.

The Columbus programme boasts more than 70 orders and local sales representative Wallis Aviation has already sold its initial three aircraft and has placed a follow-on order for another three.

"Cessna had the needs of Middle Eastern customers very much in mind when designing the Citation Columbus," says Cessna vice president, international sales, Trevor Edling.

"It will offer non-stop range from Dubai to London, the largest cabin in its class, and ample space for luggage. We believe it is a

very compelling proposition for a \$27 million aircraft and are confident it will continue to attract many more orders across the region."

The Citation Columbus is scheduled to gain full certification in 2013 and enter service in 2014. Cessna expects it to be the only aircraft in its class capable of 4,000nm (7,408km) non-stop at Mach 0.80.

Preliminary performance numbers set a maximum cruise speed of 488kt (904km/h, Mach .85), a maximum operating speed of Mach .86, a full fuel payload of 1,950lb (886kg) and take-off field length of 5,400ft (1,646m) at maximum take-off weight.

On display at MBEA is the original cabin mock-up on the static display.

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## Skyplan opens new facility in Sharjah

Skyplan, one of the world's oldest flight support services companies, has set up shop in Sharjah.

Adrian Bone, Skyplan's president says, "The new office will provide valuable flight support services in the fast-growing Middle East and Asian aviation markets."

Skyplan is headquartered in Calgary, Canada, and has been in operation since 1985. The new UAE office will provide local access to all of the company's services, including web-based flight planning, contract flight dispatch, overflight and landing permissions, ground handling and contract jet fuel.

More than 40 Skyplan dispatchers work around the clock and both Calgary and Sharjah are equipped with state-of-the-art communication facilities.

Muhammad Sami, managing director UAE, says the Sharjah operation was launched because the company felt there was a huge demand and need for a one-window flight services provider in the region.

Skyplan creates its own flight planning software and offers a variety of support services globally, including contract flight dispatch, licensed for most regulatory authorities worldwide.

Samir adds: "This is invaluable to small and medium size operators, as it provides huge cost savings for them."

# 'QUALITY IS KEY'

ExecuJet (based 541 and static) is displaying aircraft for the first time in Dubai and all set for sale.

The long-standing Bombardier sales agent is bullish about the prospects for used aircraft sales.

Andy Hoy, executive director, group sales, says that since July, when the company set up a dedicated used sales team, demand has been booming.

"We have really gone for it," he says. "We are only selling quality products."

"The aircraft on display here at MBGA have been managed by ExecuJet since new. The owners have decided they want a different aircraft. We know these aircraft inside and out, and most of them have also been maintained by us."

"If you look at our

Challenger 850, we are not trying to convince someone that it's right for them. We're looking for the buyer who needs the 850 and we can also offer them the choice to have a different interior," he says.

The Middle East is one of the largest markets for the Swiss company. "If you look at the order backlog for a Global Express XRS, it's 2014. We've got low-time aircraft that are newly new and available," says Hoy.

He is keen to point out that it isn't just a case of selling his stock. Customers trust the ExecuJet brand and will ask his team to source them an aircraft.

"A customer might come to us and say I need a Challenger 605 and I have \$2million to spend. We'll source them what they



ExecuJet's Andy Hoy sees strong demand for pre-owned

need," he explains.

Growth is very much in Hoy's sights but, he says, the recession is being slightly noticed.

"The people who were previously buying business jets simply because they

wanted one are maybe not buying now," he says. "The people that are buying a jet because they need one, are still buying."

And expansion is on the horizon for the sales team. "There are geographic gaps in

our coverage that need to be filled," he adds. "We want to continue expanding into new regions and keep up our partnership with Bombardier."

Hoy believes now is a perfect time to buy an aircraft, used or new.



## Sterling takes customer relationships to new heights

Karin Muller, sales and business development manager for Sterling Group (based 222) demonstrates the best way to develop customer relationships – work as a team.

Karin and David Kelsi, are pictured left. David, director of operations for J&P construction (J) has been her client for almost two decades and was happy to lend a hand to get the stand up in time for the show.

Muller says: "We are at the show to promote our services. The main part of our local business is ferrying spare parts around the region to help spend up AOC situations." According to Kelsi, the most pressing issue for local opera-

tors is delays caused by customs clearances, which can hold up a part for up to five days.

Both Muller and Kelsi say that currently most shipments into the region come into Dubai, which presents its own difficulties. Kelsi adds: "The opening of the new airport will ease pressure on slots. It can get quite crowded at the moment."

He was happy to help his supplier out, adding: "The business aviation community is really small and this shows how important it is to work together. We often lend a spare part to other operators, for example, in order that they don't have an AOC situation lasting too long."

## Genesis opens its first Dubai chapter

Commercial aircraft conversion specialist Genesis Custom Jetliners has opened a primary sales office in Dubai, it was announced at MBGA yesterday.

The office is headed up by Bilal Younsif, formerly head of business development and strategic planning with Royal Jet and a 20-year veteran of the aviation industry.

"We are thrilled to welcome Bilal to our team," says Victoria Ricks,

vice president of marketing for Genesis. "His extensive background in the industry makes him a great asset to our organisation. With Bilal in the lead, we are energised to show our full product line in the Middle East region and beyond."

A range of aircraft can be converted to what the firm calls a Genesis Custom Jetliner (GCJ). Including the MD80 family, Boeing 737 Classic and Next Generation

families and the Airbus A320 family.

Younsif says: "Our purpose at Genesis is to provide you with the fastest and most practical solution to owning your own private jetliner."

"Acquiring a GCJ is simple. We help you pick the best airframe for your mission and sign a contract to deliver your completed aircraft with your brand new customer interior and paint within 12 months for an agreed fixed price."

## All-business flies high

Privatair (stand 821) reports that the daily all-business class Airbus A320 service it operates for Lufthansa between Dubai and Munich is proving to be a hit with customers.

The aircraft offers plenty of space on board with 48 sleeper seats, which recline at 160 degrees.

Lufthansa also recently introduced a six-day-per-week all-business direct service to Pune in India, operated by Privatair, which also uses an Airbus A320.

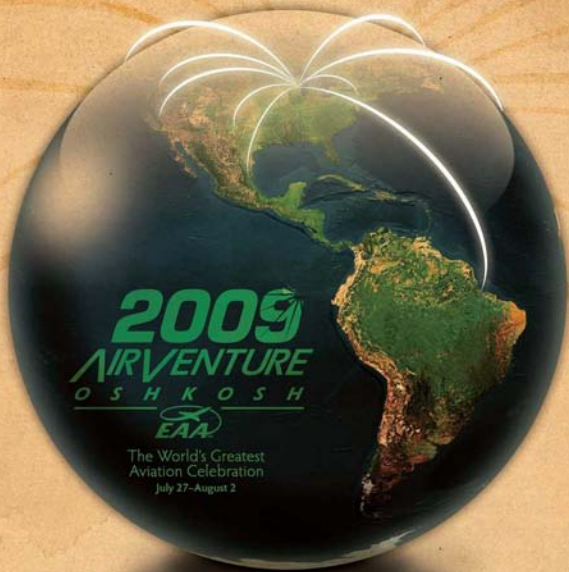
Karsten Bieri, Lufthansa's sales and service vice president for Europe says: "We find that all-business class routes to business destinations are proving extremely popular with customers."



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