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Reimagined group plans a fleet of 20 aircraft by end of 2025 FALCON SPREADS ITS WINGS

The grand unveiling of the Dubai-based Falcon private aviation group, with fresh branding, accompanied by an expansive business plan, new investment and a new CEO took place yesterday at MEBAA.

Falcon is the new identity for an enhanced and expanded Falcon Aviation Services (FAS), originally established in 2006 in Abu Dhabi and now a significant helicopter and private aviation services entity.

Earlier this year the founder and chairman of Falcon Aviation Services HH Dr Sheikh Sultan Bin Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan teamed up with Sultan Rashid Abdullah Rashid Al Shene to create and invest in the new Falcon, headquartered here at the Mohammed bin Rashid Aerospace Hub.

Two months ago, industry veteran Can Sasmaz was recruited to lead Falcon, with current FAS CEO Captain Ramandeep Oberoi continuing to head Falcon's successful helicopter business.

"Once I saw the predictions and plan for the future of this company, I was very excited and I told myself I have to be part of this team," said Sasmaz, whose career has mostly been spent in Turkey with a range of players including Turkish Technic, BE Aero and MNG Jet.

Sasmaz is hitting the ground running, overseeing a business that is ramping up at pace having acquired 10 aircraft over the past year, including six Bombardier Global 6000s and two Challenger 605s, with four more

arriving in the coming six weeks. Additionally, in less than a year Falcon has already built up a team of more than 250 people based in Dubai.

"We are also talking with the OEMs for new aircraft from the factory as we target a fleet of not less than 20 aircraft in the coming year," said Sasmaz.

Falcon is negotiating an initial order for four aircraft for delivery from August 2025 and for a second order for 10 units. Both orders will be finalised within three months, he noted.

Falcon is made up of four units: Luxe, the private jet charter operator; Elite, the private terminal operator; Technic, the MRO business; and Flight Support.

Visitors to the show could hardly miss Falcon's glitzy stand, a huge wel-

coming poster on the show walls, funky promo cubes and the full-length branding on the ATC tower, resplendent in its new corporate colour of regal burgundy.

On the static area, Falcon is showing a Bombardier Global 5000 and a Challenger 605, in addition to a FAS Leonardo AW169 and a Tesla Cybertruck. ▲



Can Şaşmaz, Falcon's new CEO, alongside the rebranded operator's Global 5000 and one of its Tesla Cybertrucks

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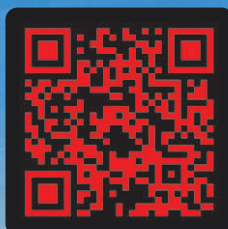
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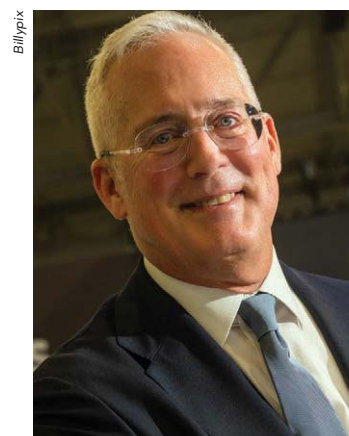


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Kurt Edwards, director general of IBAC, gave the opening keynote at yesterday's BizAv Talks

Edwards stresses industry's societal benefits

“Just as critical to safety is our license to operate. We’re seeing environmental-sustainability issues increasingly important to our ability to operate in several regions in the world,” declared Kurt Edwards, director general of the International Business Aviation Council (IBAC), the keynote speaker at yesterday’s first BizAv Talks session.

This industry has faced criticism from various quarters over its sustainability record and Edwards

and other industry leaders seek to defend it where and when they can.

“We need to consider business aviation’s contribution to societal connectivity and economic activity in addition to its commitment to environmental sustainability,” said Edwards.

“In many cases, when some focus on the environmental impact of business aviation, they omit, or they forget, the societal and the economic benefits that our industry brings worldwide.

“In most parts of the world, the economic and the societal benefits that our industry provide are truly the most prized of those three.

Business aviation connects remote and underserved communities around the world, and in doing so, it fosters that economic activity, it fosters jobs in those locations.

“Business can develop outside of political and financial capitals, as long as they have easy connectivity to them ... this is the beauty of our industry.”

IC Leasing orders second Falcon 2000

Dubai-based business aircraft leasing company IC Leasing signed an order for a second Dassault Falcon 2000LXS at the show yesterday.

The Falcon is scheduled for delivery in the second quarter of 2025 and will be operated by DC Aviation GmbH, IC Leasing’s long-standing strategic partner, out of its main base in Stuttgart, Germany, but managing director Svenja Wortmann said it will be in international use and a likely visitor for the DC Aviation station here at DWC.

Khader Mattar, founder of IC Leasing, said: “The Falcon 2000LXS was selected for its industry-leading cabin features



A MODEL DEAL

Khader Mattar, CEO of IC Group; Renaud Cloatre, International sales director, Dassault Aviation and Svenja Wortmann, managing director DC Aviation

and comfort, impressive operating cost-effectiveness, and high reliability – qualities that meet the evolving demands of today’s business aviation users.

He added: “As users and operators strive for operational, and cost efficiency they increasingly require flexible financial solutions. IC Leasing is committed to providing adaptive, creative financing solutions that not only

streamline the process but also address challenges faced by our clients.”

IC Leasing has introduced an innovative lease-to-purchase solution, which enables clients to finance the acquisition of aircraft without requiring an upfront down payment. Clients agree to a fixed monthly instalment and a fixed purchase price for the aircraft at a future date, offering financial flex-

ibility while freeing capital for other income-generating investments.

Wortmann added: “We value the close and trustful cooperation with IC Leasing, which has spanned over multiple years, and we are very pleased about the addition of the third Falcon 2000 to our fleet.”

With the new aircraft, DC Aviation Group will operate a total of 37 business jets, including six Falcons.



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Royal ascent as MEBAAs flies high

HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the president of Dubai Civil Aviation (DCA) and chairman of Dubai Airports and the Emirates Group attended the show yesterday to join MEBAAs founding chairman Ali Ahmed Alnaqbi for a tour of the exhibition hall and the static aircraft park. The presence of Sheikh Ahmed is a firm indication of the emirate's belief of a fully integrated aviation industry with business aviation playing a vital role. "We have seen a lot of companies move their headquarters to the UAE and Dubai becomes the hub of business aviation. That is clear to see," Alnaqbi said.

Saudi Arabia making progress on GA facilities

Saudi Arabia is making a major effort to create a more favourable environment for general aviation (GA), although more needs to be done to improve facilities for private aircraft.

The Saudi regulator, the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA), indicated the change of direction in 2023 by the creation of a GA department within the organisation – a clear sign that it recognises the increasing importance of the private aviation sector.

Speaking at Biz Av Talks at the show, Imtiyaz Manzary, general manager of the new department, outlined some of the recent

changes to regulations, designed to make life easier for private aviation operators in the Kingdom.

These included removing the longstanding regulation that FBOs and MROs had to be 51 per cent owned by Saudi interests and giving foreign-owned private aircraft an annual permit to operate within Saudi Arabia, rather than the previous case-by-case permit.

The changes came against the backdrop of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiative to diversify its economy; developing the aviation sector forms a major part of the project.

Additionally, Manzary said, GACA had announced plans to

create six new GA airports around the country, as well as nine new GA terminals at existing airports.

One of the panellists on the session entitled: The rise of Saudi Arabia: exploring the boom and opportunities, said that he was generally satisfied with GACA's new attitude towards GA, although more needed to be done.

Mohammed Bokhari, CEO of Jeddah-based private jet operator Aviation Horizons, said that he could detect a sea-change in GACA's approach. The regulator was now actively listening to



Imtiyaz Manzary, general manager of the new GA department
BillyPix

GA operators. "I'm happy with a lot of things they've done, not happy with others." There

was a requirement for more MROs and FBOs, for example.

Manzary said that facilities such as new MRO hangars could take some time. But GACA was determined to improve conditions for the GA community.

GACA's president, Abdulaziz Al-Duailj, had set the tone, for this, Manzary said. Al-Duailj had said that the regulator should be a facilitator for the country's aviation interests.

Nasjet pioneers Saudi Arabia's private aviation market

Ahead of its 25th anniversary celebrations, which are being held in January, Nasjet continues to ride the wave of growth in Saudi Arabia's private aviation market.

Driven by international tourism and ambitious projects such as NEOM, Sindalah and Red Sea Global, the sector is experiencing rapid expansion.



Specialising in aircraft management and charter operations, Nasjet currently operates a fleet of nine aircraft, which Capt.

Mohammed Abdullah Al-Gabbas, the company's CCO (left), describes as the "region's most versatile".

It is the only aircraft management company globally to operate a VVIP Boeing 747 for a private entity

and the first in Saudi Arabia to operate a Pilatus PC-24. Its fleet also includes a Twin Otter, Airbus A318, Gulfstream G450, Falcon 900B, Cessna Citation and Embraer legacy 650, showcasing the company's unique operational capabilities.

Looking ahead to 2025, Nasjet plans to "expand its fleet with up to three new aircraft," said Yosef Hafiz, VP sales and marketing. "We are also negotiating with different companies to purchase and operate aircraft on their behalf," added Capt. Al-Gabbas, hinting at imminent deals.

Amid this growth, Nasjet is working closely with Saudi regulators to enhance aviation frameworks, making it easier to induct aircraft onto the certificates and they've made some positive changes, the pair noted.

"They've actually changed the rules for private owners recently to make it easier to operate aircraft and to induct aircraft in Saudi, so they are listening to our feedback."

Meanwhile, "GACA is advancing a new business aviation strategy including general aviation airports in Riyadh, Jeddah and other locations," added Al-Gabbas.

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MySky collaboration to transform business aviation procurement



Teaming up with EJS, Chris Marich, co-founder of MySky ▲

MEBAA exhibitor, MySky, announced a strategic partnership with portfolio management provider Essential Jet Solutions (EJS) yesterday. The collaboration aims to streamline procurement processes to enhance compliance, and financial control for aircraft owners and operators.

The partnership will serve a growing customer base of 1,500 aircraft, leveraging EJS's vendor optimisation expertise and MySky's automation tools to deliver significant cost savings in

fuel, ground handling, and airport services.

EJS's advanced capabilities in compliance and reporting will integrate seamlessly with MySky procure's intelligent comparison, contract negotiation, and auditing features, offering a robust solution for flight-related and recurring services.

Chris Marich, co-founder of MySky, said: "No-one in the procurement and portfolio management sector has invested more in their tech than EJS and

we share a vision of how that tech should be leveraged in the future of business aviation."

EJS CEO Steve Fry added that the partnership integrates procurement operations and spend management into one seamless ecosystem. "We like to think of this solution as an extension and enhancement of customers' operations teams," he said. The partnership also highlights MySky's commitment to advancing business aviation with scalable, technology-driven solutions.

▲ NEWS IN BRIEF

Global activity hits highs in November

According to industry market intelligence provider WingX, global business jet activity in Week 47 (November 18-24), was up 13 per cent compared with the same week last year, primarily due to the later Thanksgiving week this year.

The year-to-date figures to November 24, for total global business jet activity, show a one per cent drop compared with last year.

However, this is pulled down by January and September being relatively weak months. The market has seen good recovery, as October and November hit new highs and the four-week trend is now three per cent ahead of last year.

Business jet activity in the Middle East at the end of November, was eight per cent higher than week 47 in 2023, with the four-week trend rising to three per cent above last year. There was strong growth last month in Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, with the UAE recording 1,814 departures, an increase of 56 per cent year-on-year.

MD expands to northern ops

MD Aviation has announced the official launch of operations in Egypt and Jordan during the MEBAA show. The company was founded in late 2023 to offer charter brokerage and aviation consultation.

Maintenance and an ACJ mock-up at Comlux's new home

Comlux marked the official opening of its service and maintenance centre at Dubai Al Maktoum International Airport (DWC) on the opening day of the MEBAA Show yesterday.

The 20,000 sqm-facility offers aircraft owners and operators light maintenance, hangarage, AOG services, cabin detailing, and aircraft cleaning services, as well as providing a suitable home for Comlux's regional headquarters.

The centre houses a VIP reception area and a design showroom featuring a life-size

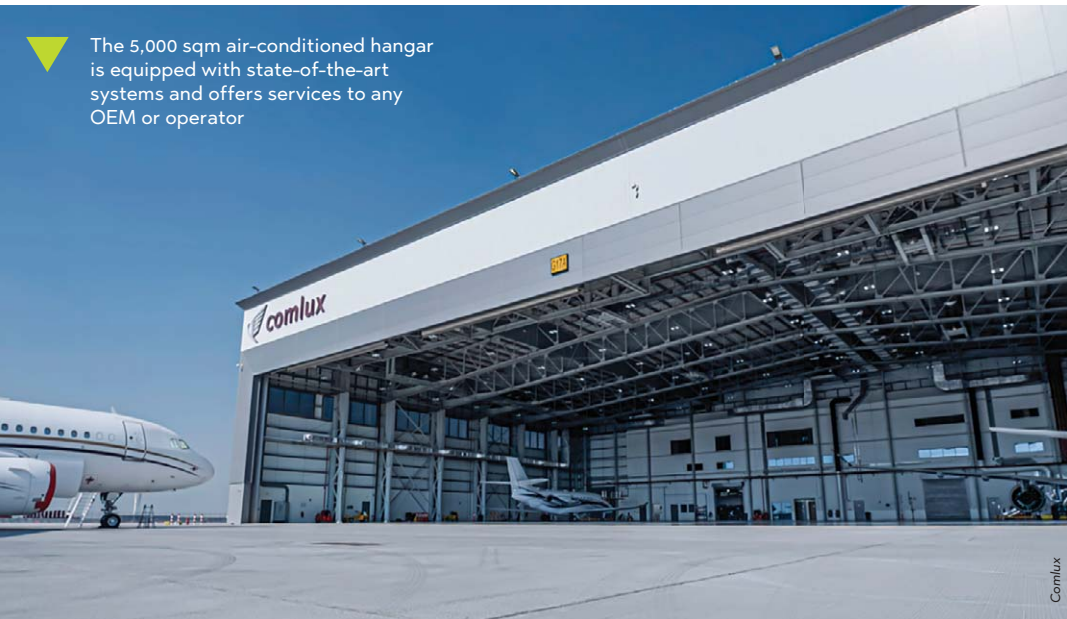
mock-up of an ACJ TwoTwenty aircraft, as well as dedicated technical installation and storage areas, spare parts storage and workshops.

The 5,000 sqm air-conditioned hangar is equipped with state-of-the-art systems and offers services to any OEM or operator. The Part 145 maintenance organisation approved by EASA, has already performed a maintenance check on the world's first Airbus ACJ TwoTwenty aircraft in the new facility.

As well as supporting clients

across the Middle East and Asia, the Dubai maintenance and service centre is designed to support some of the activities of US-based Comlux Completion, which focuses on cabin outfitting and MRO services.

Marking the occasion, Richard Gaona, executive chairman and CEO, Comlux, said: "I am extremely happy and proud of the Comlux team for this new step in our development. We will be close to our Middle Eastern clients, and our mission is to serve them to the best of our abilities."



▲ The 5,000 sqm air-conditioned hangar is equipped with state-of-the-art systems and offers services to any OEM or operator



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Xinatis smoothing the way for VVIP acquisitions

Demand for corporate and VVIP aircraft is increasing amid geopolitical tension and airport security issues. And that is good news for companies like Toronto-headquartered Xinatis. The company specialises in aircraft and engine sales, lease/financing structuring as well as special mission operations and business plan support. CEO Sameer Adam (pictured right) is at MEBAA finalising a deal for a BBJ to the MENA region for an undisclosed customer.

“The demand for these VVIP aircraft is

growing,” Adam said. “Historically the GCC has been a strong and stable market for this type of aircraft, but increasingly we are seeing a lot of interest from wider afield, such as east Europe, west Asia and a lot more interest from Africa.

“We are working on financing solutions that will see aircraft coming from Asia to these newer markets. These are very new aircraft, often just a few years old,” Adam said.

Xinatis is increasing its presence in the region and is planning an office in Dubai.



MedAire partners with RoyalJet on flying DAK-tors

International SOS company, MedAire, has entered a partnership with RoyalJet that will transform in-flight medical safety and further enhance the overall passenger experience.

With the aim of elevating on-board medical diagnostic capabilities and ensuring enhanced safety measures for all of RoyalJet’s travelling guests, the collaboration involves the introduction of MedAire’s advanced digital assessment kit (DAK) across RoyalJet’s fleet. This includes DAK’s seamless integration with MedAire’s MedLink service, which ensures instant communication with emergency room physicians who provide real-time support and crucial assessment capabilities.

“Safety is at the core of every aspect of RoyalJet’s operations,” said Shafiu Syed, CEO of RoyalJet. “That includes the medical well-being and safety of all our travelling guests and crew throughout their journey. This underlines a mutual commitment of RoyalJet and MedAire to innovation, operational excellence, and passenger and crew welfare.

MedAire has been operational for 40 years providing remote medical, security and operational support to clients in the air, on land and at sea.

The company, which has a strong presence in the Middle East and has a facility at Dubai Airport Freezone, has recently added new security support features for



business aircraft operators in the Middle East, including artificial intelligence (AI) powered news and events service.

Mental health and wellbeing is another focus for the company, with MedAire Wellbeing Services in collaboration with Odilia Clark, launching the ‘Talk to a Peer’ services in the Middle East/Asia region during the MEBAA show.

“Leaders in impairment risk management and workplace wellbeing, Odilia Clark and MedAire teamed up earlier this year to set a new standard for peer support within the business aviation sphere, offering a targeted approach to mental health and wellbeing tailored for aviation professionals,” explained Chris Potter, head of marketing.

MedAire Wellbeing Services, leverages the Talk to a Peer methodology that is designed to meet aviation crews’ unique challenges. By harnessing digital health advancements, the service connects individuals with Peer Support Volunteers (PSVs) – current or former aviation professionals trained in best-in-class training that includes empathy, active listening, and resilience-building.

“This service promises an understanding and relevant support system, crucial for accessible and reliable mental health assistance,” said Potter.

“Using a secure and confidential platform, MedAire Wellbeing Services ensures that aviation personnel can find support 24/7 anywhere in the world.”

Medevac with a difference

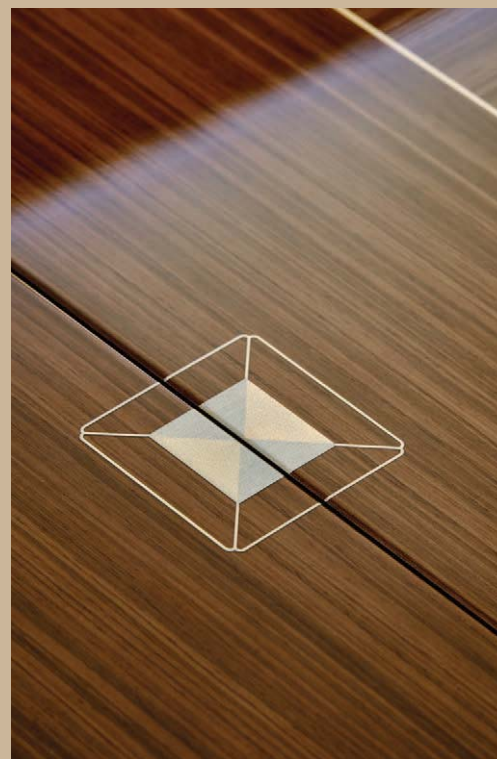
FAI Aviation Group is one of the largest private jet charter operators in Europe with a fleet of Bombardier Global Express, Challenger 604s and Learjet 60 aircraft. Its Dubai-based FAI rent-a-jet is market leader for air ambulance in the Gulf Region. At its helm is Barbara Baumgartner, pictured) who has helped grow the company in the region to what it is today.

“I joined FAI in January 2003 as the local representative for the Middle East,” said Baumgartner. I was promoted to the managing director role in 2011 when FAI opened its branch office in Dubai.”

The company works on a mission-by-mission basis handling various emergencies, including trauma, oncology, paediatrics and organ transplants, using mainly local pilots and medical staff – who are also trained in aviation emergencies.

Baumgartner said medevac in this region needs a concierge, which makes it different to other parts of the world. “We provide our services here to people that include royals, government entities, and large local companies, and we also work on humanitarian issues,” she said.





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Speaking at this year's MEBA, Pascal Bachmann, SVP sales Jetcraft EMEA (pictured), underlined that the business and commercial aviation broker's Middle Eastern clientele is notably younger than the global average.

Approximately 36.4 per cent of buyers in the region are under 45, compared to just 28 per cent globally. According to Bachmann, this demographic trend "reflects the region's dynamic growth and its embrace of innovation-driven industries, such as AI."

He highlighted two recent Jetcraft transactions involving younger buyers working in AI, underscoring the rising influence of "new tech" billionaires on private aircraft ownership.

"Globally, this demographic shift signifies an increasing preference for high-tech solutions and modern aircraft features, distinguishing the Middle East as a unique and forward-thinking market," he added.

On the financial side, Bachmann noted that while Middle Eastern buyers traditionally favour cash purchases, leasing and trade-in options are gaining traction as liquidity becomes a greater priority.

"Financial institutions are stepping up with competitive loan structures tailored to aviation, while global interest rate reductions are making financing more accessible, especially for first-time buyers. Jetcraft simplifies these processes and delivers results uniquely suited to each client's regional and monetary needs," Bachmann continued.

Although the Middle East is often associated with large jets, Bachmann revealed that Jetcraft's demand spans the spectrum, from

Jetcraft sees surge in younger buyers

ultra-long-range jets, such as the Global 7500 to owner-piloted smaller aircraft like the Citation Mustang.

Looking ahead, Bachmann acknowledged several challenges for Jetcraft in the region. Geopolitical instability, including the ongoing unrest in Syria, poses risks to business operations. "While the Middle East is a thriving market, it is also a region

marked by sudden shifts that can disrupt operations and demand. We remain acutely aware of these dynamics, striving to adapt and support our clients amid uncertainty," he said.

Bachman also touched on the ongoing debate around sustainability in aviation, calling for a balanced approach. "If we were to ground business aviation tomorrow, scrap every aircraft and

turn them into Coca-Cola cans, would it have such a huge impact on our climate that we would be able to say, 'goal achieved, global warming is over!' The answer is no.

"Business aviation contributes to 0.04 per cent of global carbon emissions and in stopping it, we wouldn't eradicate global warming, but hundreds of thousands of jobs and people's livelihoods would be gone," he said.



PAS port for North American flight stop

Prestwick Aviation Services (PAS) is seeking to generate more tech stops from Middle East-originating flights as they head towards North America.

Based at Glasgow Prestwick Airport on the west coast of Scotland, PAS is ideally-situated on the great circle route for aircraft making transatlantic crossings, said PAS business development manager, Kris Baillie.

PAS competes with Shannon, in Ireland, and Keflavik, Iceland, for private jet traffic. It currently has a healthy flow of military traffic and is trying to develop more civilian flights

stopping over for fuel.

Among the airport's advantages, said Baillie, is the fact that it is open 24/7, has a long runway, excellent weather record and no PPR (prior permission required).

"Operators know they can come in, in the middle of the night and, if their timings slip or they're delayed, they know we're going to be flexible.

"We know we're never going to be a Farnborough or a Le Bourget, but we've got all the facilities you need.

"We've got the standard VIP and crew lounges. We have our own fuel trucks and own all our ground

equipment, and cargo facilities as well."

Although long-range types such as the Gulfstream and Global Express can make the Atlantic crossing non-stop, many other types still require to make a stop before tackling the ocean crossing – often via Keflavik and Goose Bay in Canada before reaching their final destinations in the US.

PAS has an agreement with Switzerland's Pilatus Aircraft for all single-engined PC-12 turboprops on delivery to the US to stop off in Scotland; Daher's TBM turboprop delivery flights also stop off there.

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Greenpoint Technologies adds luxury to the world's largest jets

Greenpoint Technologies — the company that delivered the first VVIP Boeing 747-800 to the world — is back at the MEBA show after an eight-year absence.

The region has always been an important one for Greenpoint, which is part of the Safran Group, as it designs and carries out completions on head-of-state aircraft.

With a model of the iconic BBJ 747-800 at the centre of the stand, (the actual first of the type is still on head-of-state duties in the wider region) the team at MEBA are focusing on other Boeing models that are growing in demand.

The exhibit is showcasing "Oasis", its latest BBJ 777-9 interior concept. Designed by Greenpoint's in-house team, Oasis combines unparalleled luxury with innovative technology, offering a serene and sophisticated experience for elite travellers.

The company is also highlighting the innovative AeroSuite, which is due to be certified on a BBJ 787-9 next year.

"The AeroSuite provides a private sanctuary for passengers to rest, work, or dine during flight. Key features include privacy walls, a dedicated lie-



LUXURY MODEL

Chad Thorne with the BBJ 747-800 model on display at the Greenpoint booth

flat bed, a separate reclining seat with a storage ottoman, a versatile tracking tray table, a 32" monitor, and a generous 75" tall closet for storage," said VP business development,

Chad Thorne. "We are excited to return to the MEBA Show and showcase our portfolio," said Thorne. "MEBA presents a key opportunity to engage with valued clients and industry leaders to

discuss ongoing projects, offer realistic solutions to challenges, and foster meaningful partnerships that propel business, drive mutual success, and pave the way for future ventures."

BillyPix



The idea is to take RightJet to the client — CEO Mark Hardman ▲

Lounge launches boost business for RightJet

Displaying its new gold logo and elegant staff uniforms on stand 225, private jet services company RightJet is working to raise its profile and open private aviation to a wider audience.

Following a rebrand earlier this year, RightJet has opened two private jet lounges in the UAE, one at the Emirates Palace Mandarin hotel in Abu Dhabi and a second at Dubai's Jumeirah Burj Al Arab hotel, offering bespoke private aviation solutions — and unique photo opportunities.

CEO Mark Hardman said: "The idea is to take RightJet to the client. It is a congested and competitive

market, with 65 brokers who have offices in Dubai. We are differentiating ourselves with these lounges, as well as our turnkey services covering the whole life cycle of aircraft ownership."

The Emirates Palace lounge features an aircraft mock up based on the Gulfstream G700. Hardman said: "We are aiming to be more accessible and inclusive. Set just off the main atrium, our forward fuselage offers an immersive experience and a popular photo opportunity, while the rear fuselage is for the more private, intense discussions.

"The lounges bring us attention

from a wide range of people daily, with up to 6,000 day visitors passing through the atrium daily, as well as the heads of state, delegations, dignitaries and celebrities in residence. But for us it is not about volume, it is building relationships, trust and credibility."

The lounges have shown tangible business results since the Abu Dhabi lounge's opening at the end of September and the Dubai lounge opening in early November. Hardman said: "We have four deals in the pipeline, as a result, but the bigger relationships we have been able to forge are priceless."



Jerome Ferasin (left), chief strategy & sales officer of AviaVIP with Can Şaşmaz, CEO of Falcon

Falcon Elite and Aviary Aero join the Club

Yesterday saw AviaVIP welcome the first two members of its newly-launched “Club” network, with Falcon Elite and Aviary both signing up as strategic partners.

With an FBO network spanning 57 airports in Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, AviaVIP is a leading force in Europe’s FBO sector.

Its partnership with Falcon Elite aims to enhance services for business jet operators travelling between Europe and the UAE, creating a seamless and unified VIP network.

“It will create a unified network for VIP aircraft operations, ensuring a seamless experience for business jet operators,” said Jerome Ferasin, chief strategy and sales officer, AviaVIP.

The Falcon Elite signing was followed by a signing with Cairo-based Aviary, which offers a range of services tailored for business jet operators across 13 airports in Egypt. The partnership is set to elevate VIP handling services in Egypt – “a fast-growing country for business aviation,” according to Ferasin.

The launch of AviaVIP’s “Club” signals a major milestone, with a combined network of 71 locations across the Middle East and North Africa. “The creation of the AviaVIP Club reinforces our status as an undisputed leader in business aviation handling and FBO management,” said Laurent Levaux, president of Aviapartner. “This initiative accelerates our network expansion while benefitting from the expertise of the AviaVIP Club’s partner.”

RoyalJet adds new options with latest BBJ addition

Abu Dhabi-based premium private jet operator RoyalJet has added a new Boeing BBJ to its current fleet of eight, but this aircraft has a difference.

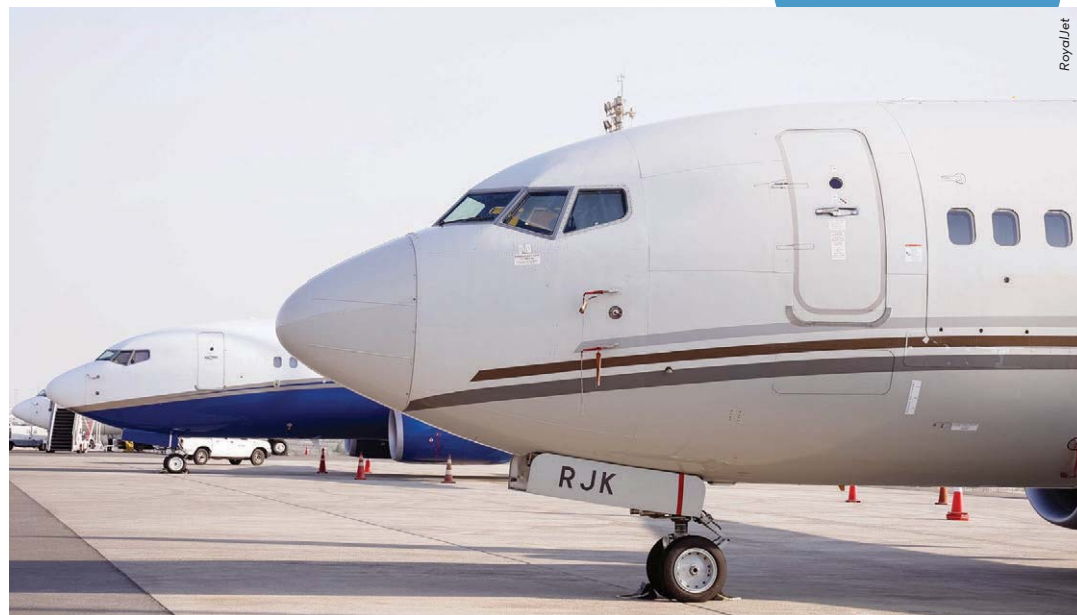
“We are committed to addressing the needs of the large business jet market by introducing the latest addition to our fleet of Boeing Business Jets (BBJ),” said Shafiu Syed, chief executive officer.

“Known as the RJK, it has a revolutionary design that transitions between four distinct configurations – so it can provide for 90-seat economy style, 58 seat all business class, 36-seat VIP, as well as converting to a purpose-built cargo configuration,” explained Syed.

The aircraft’s features include a cargo door, reconfigurable interior, Ka-band inflight connectivity and the fastest in-flight internet network.

The aircraft is also equipped with FANS 1/A (future air navigation system), which provides a means for direct communication between the aircraft and air traffic control (ATC) through data link technology.

It is also equipped with the first ever Boeing BBJ certified flexible auxiliary tank configuration offered by Quite Wings in Seattle, USA. This flexibility offers a wide



variety of aircraft ranges vs cargo capacity, based on client request. Aircraft can be configured with zero to six auxiliary tanks based on mission requirement, which can be performed on the line within 24 hrs.

“This extraordinary aircraft offers unparalleled flexibility and performance, making it the ideal choice for a wide range of missions. We are proud to deliver this cutting-edge solution to our

clients,” said Syed. The RJK was added to the company fleet last year and is already in operation.

“It is the hunting season here at the moment, so for high-end customers, they can use the jet in cargo format to transport their hunting equipment to countries such as Morocco, Pakistan, and even Afghanistan,” said Syed.

“Due to the nature of our customers, we can fly to places other people can’t get to and the Middle

East is a great leverage for such destinations. And, of course, we pride ourselves on our very high standard for quality and safety, as well as being able to offer an amazing customer experience,” he said.

Syed said the company is looking to expand more with new aircraft ‘of different sizes’, expand its geographical footprint, as well as look into other ancillary businesses such as FBOs and aircraft management.

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

RoyalJet’s RJK adds a new dimension

Regulators stepping up to help business aviation

Regulators across the region are generally supportive of the growth aspirations of the business aviation industry across the Middle East, according to panellists on the opening BizAv Talks panel, moderated by IBAC head Kurt Edwards.

Edwards posed his question about whether regulators in the Middle East were helpful to the industry, especially considering his experience of policymakers tending to understand the airline world better.

“It did seem like general aviation was on the back-burner,” said Captain Abdullah Alhaider, advisor to the CEO at Dammam Airports Company, who had previously been advising Saudi Arabia’s CAA on its business aviation strategy with the kingdom’s Vision 2030 in mind.

“But in the last two years the CAA has revamped and changed a lot of the policies, whether economic, operational or safety, to encourage general aviation businesses in the country, and to facilitate companies to come and operate,” said Captain Alhaider.

Hanna Hakamo, CEO of Valo Aviation, which has just become the first business jet operator based in Bahrain, agrees, even if it did take two years to achieve its air



operators certificate.

“If I compared working in Bahrain and in Europe, the connections with the regulator are much closer ... we have been drinking hundreds of litres of tea together,” she joked.

“It is really supportive to work with the regulator. They are doing their best to help us grow in the region,” added Hakamo.

Overall, the visionary outlook of the region, and Dubai in particular, towards aviation, has driven the

industry’s strong development, said Holger Ostheimer, managing director of DC Aviation Al-Futtaim.

“If I compare [regulators in this region] with the UK, US or Germany you can actually call an inspector on a Sunday night at 10 o’clock, ask them a question and they will respond. It is a simple example, but illustrates the difference working in this region compared with others,” said Ostheimer.

Samir Talhouni, managing director of Jordan’s Arab Wings, a company that has AOCs in four countries, observed: “You definitely do have very proactive regulators in the region that are progressive in terms of customer service.”

Talhouni explained how Jordan is acting as an incubator for advanced aerial mobility development, which requires a “very tolerant, legal infrastructure and regulatory framework to be able to absorb that kind of innovation.”

Singapore launching business aviation show

While business aviation is booming in the Middle East region, Asia Pacific is also seeing a surge in business aircraft. Due to this, organisers of the Singapore Airshow have decided to launch its own dedicated business aviation show.

Called Business Aviation Asia Forum and Expo (BAAFEx) it will be a biennial event, with the first edition to be held from March 4-6, 2025, at the Changi Exhibition Centre. Its exhibitors, Experia, have come to MEBAA to see how such an event works and to meet with potential exhibitors and visitors to BAAFEx.

“Honeywell releases a study every year, and recently it predicted there will be 8,500 business jet deliveries globally in the next year. Of that, the market share in Asia Pacific shows it will take 11 per cent – this is a big growth in just a few months from when it was 10 per cent.

“There are now more than 70 business jets in Singapore, making it the largest region in south-east Asia,” said Leck Chet Lam, managing director of Experia pictured left.

“Singapore is an ideal location to hold the show because it is a popular business centre that is

well connected to the region and globally. So, we are thrilled to be launching BAAFEx, an event that will not only showcase the latest advancements in business aviation and general aviation, but also provide a platform for industry leaders to collaborate and drive the future of the industry,” he said.

Besides aircraft manufacturers, BAAFEx is already filling up with exhibitors from across the board of business and general aviation including TAG Aviation, MedAire, and the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority. It will also see an array of aircraft on its static.

There’s good news and bad news for Airbus Corporate Jets president Chadi Saade...

Hot market gives ACJ delivery headache

Airbus Corporate Jets president Chadi Saade faces something of a dilemma. The good news is that his ACJ range of widebody and single-aisle jetliners are highly sought after across the world and particularly in the Middle East.

“There is a big demand today on Airbus aircraft,” said Saade, as he anticipates a record sales year of 11 ACJ firm orders in 2024, which is the best result for 17 years. A normal sales year would consist of four to six ACJ deals.

The bad news is he can’t get hold of them for corporate customers very quickly.

They are down the queue for new aircraft considering that Airbus has an airline order backlog for its aircraft of more than 8,000 units with delivery positions booked until nearly the end of the decade.

It is of comfort to Saade that he does have some pre-allocated delivery positions on the single-aisle ACJ220 and ACJ320neo each year. “We benefit from that to be able to offer shorter lead times to the market,” he explained.

The delivery backlog for Airbus widebodies is surprisingly beginning to match that of single-aisle models, noted Saade. However, ACJ does not have pre-allocated widebody ACJ350 or ACJ330neo delivery slots.

And there is a replacement wave for widebody business jets coming soon as the current fleet ages, he said. Airbus is forecasting that there are 110 plus large jets in the

Middle East business aircraft fleet, representing 40 per cent of the total fleet, that are older than 15 years.

Another issue is that the interior outfitting of widebodies takes 18-24 months compared to 10-12 months for single-aisles. “This means the renewal of the widebody fleet will require an even earlier decision than the single aisles. So, it is getting critical for the entities that want to renew widebodies to decide now,” said Saade.

He will not disclose what the earliest date is for the delivery of a new ACJ widebody order. “It will depend on when people will come in and order but definitely not in the next few years,” he said.

On the supply chain issues that are causing aircraft delivery delays, Saade said: “It is still challenging. There is a shortage of primary materials. There is complexity in the overall supply chain. But we

are managing it pretty well and with very good transparency with our customers which is really important.”

Saade believes ACJ models are particularly well suited to the Middle East region. It is the number one market for ACJs with 60 in service today.

Overall, the region is the largest market for ACJ or equivalent sized aircraft with 130 in service out of a global fleet of 420.

With the region’s strong traffic growth, the fleet renewal imperative, products that offer airline-style cabin and cargo space and capacity, plus airliner operating economics and reliability, Saade’s sales pitch is that the modern ACJ range is well-placed to capitalise and deliver sustained Middle East success.

On the eve of MEBAA, AMAC Aerospace was confirmed as the fifth member and sixth location

of the ACJ service centre network where Airbus works with high-quality global MROs to provide approved services.

“Our customers are asking for more approved MROs that can support them,” said Saade. “The market is so tight at the moment on the outfitting, on maintenance, and on the upgrades, that we need more partners.” This point was reinforced to Saade by a customer advisory board meeting held in Dubai during MEBAA week.

“It was a no-brainer for us to join the network,” said Tarek Muhiddin, chief operating officer of the Swiss MRO and aircraft modification specialist. AMAC has been working on Airbus aircraft projects for over 15 years, including some of the first completions of ACJ320neos.

“This deal gives us access to customers who do not already know us,” said Muhiddin. ▲

IN DEMAND

Chadi Saade – needs more aircraft for corporate customers



Saade believes ACJ models are particularly well suited to the Middle East region. It is the number one market for ACJs with 60 in service today



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