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A further two green aircraft are undergoing completion at Comlux's Indianapolis facility, with deliveries set for the end of 2024 and early 2025, respectively. The remaining four aircraft on order will arrive at the site in 2025 and early 2026.

Each completion project takes around 10 months, but White says

Comlux is working to reduce the lead time by two months.

"By 2025 we should have refined our processes and hopefully have a healthy pipeline of ACJ TwoTentys," he says. The company will also have capacity by the end of 2025 to accommodate three examples simultaneously in its hangar.

Launched in 2020 as a VIP version of the A220-100 regional airliner, the ACJ TwoTwenty sits in a unique part of the market which Airbus calls the "extra-large bizjet".

"There is nothing on the market that offers such a huge cabin with a 5,650nm [10,470km] range at a \$83 million price tag," says White.



Capt Serge Martinez and cabin crew member Maragarita Akhmetova from the ACJ TwoTwenty team with the aircraft on the static

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FLIGHT DAILY NEWS

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Gibbs (left) with Riccardo Del Duca of Leonardo Belgium

Leonardo ramps up UK helo MRO

Leonardo is ramping up its maintenance, repair and overhaul service to commercial helicopter customers in the UK in partnership with Aldenham Aviation, owner of Elstree Aerodrome, north of London.

The Italian manufacturer will lease a 650sq m (7,000sq ft) existing hangar at the general aviation airfield, but in the longer-term plans to develop a larger facility with Aldenham.

The operation will coordinate with Leonardo's European logistics centre. There are around 170 AW109, AW139, AW169, and AW189 civil helicopters in service in the UK including in VIP, offshore, and medical evacuation configurations, but this is set to increase to more than 200 within two years as existing orders are delivered, says Paul Wilson, programme manager with Leonardo Belgium.

Leonardo has an MRO operation at its Yeovil factory, although this is focused on military helicopters.

Elstree, which promotes itself as a convenient fuelling alternative to the London Heliport in Battersea for helicopters serving the capital, is a former Second World War airfield and many of the buildings date from that era. However, Aldenham has plans to redevelop the aerodrome by attracting new tenants and investing in infrastructure, says managing director Humphrey Gibbs.

Big opportunity

Airbus and Comlux claim large-cabin ACJ TwoTwenty is in class of its own

Kate Sarsfield

Airbus and Comlux are on the hunt for more customers for the ACJ TwoTwenty, with the VIP narrowbody on prominent display in the EBACE static park.

The pair hope to build on growing momentum for the twinjet, having so far gathered eight orders since its launch in 2020.

Present at EBACE is the second customer jet (9H-220CJ), which was handed over in February, 10 months behind the lead example.

Both examples are privately owned but operated under management by Comlux.

"The first aircraft has flown more than 700h with its owner,"

says Adam White, chief executive of Comlux Completion, which has an exclusive agreement with Airbus to outfit the first 17 aircraft.

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Polished Pearl

Rolls-Royce is closing in on a perfect 10 with its latest business jet engine as the number of test flights racked up by the Pearl 10X approaches the double-digit milestone.

Developed for the ultra-long-range Dassault Falcon 10X, the powerplant made its maiden test flight on 29 March aboard the engine maker's Boeing 747-200 flying testbed from its base in Tucson, Arizona.

Since then, flight testing has progressed smoothly and the engine has performed flawlessly, says Philipp Zeller, senior vice-president, Dassault, at Rolls-Royce.

Early tests have seen the Pearl 10X confirming its high-altitude performance, with the 747 flying up to 45,000ft. "It came back with really good results, which is very encouraging for us," he says.

To date, "almost 10" flights have been performed with the Pearl 10X, "and this week we will cross to 10", says Dr Dirk Geisinger, head of business aviation at Rolls-Royce.

Two Pearl 10Xs will be used for the flight-test campaign, with the initial example - installed on a specially designed pylon on an inboard station on the 747's starboard wing - due to return to Rolls-Royce's facility in Germany "in the coming months", says Zeller. Its sister engine will then be installed and used to address different test points such as anti-icing performance.

Rolls-Royce hopes to wrap up the flight-test campaign by the end of the summer, enabling delivery of the powerplant pair to Dassault in line with plans for the Falcon 10X's maiden sortie next year.

Neither Dassault nor Rolls-Royce have disclosed the exact thrust figure for the Pearl 10X, simply saying it is rated at more than 18,000lb (80kN).

6X has the right Ambience



Voight: Luxury and convenience

Dominic Perry

As Dassault Aviation ramps up deliveries of its new Falcon 6X following certification of the ultra-wide-cabin twinjet in August last year, customers are getting familiar with the latest-generation cabin management system (CMS).

Provided by Collins Aerospace and branded as Ambience for the new Falcon, it offers passengers an unrivalled and intuitive entertainment and CMS package for the high-end jet.

"It brings luxury and convenience to customers

whether they are at home or in the air," says Nathan Voight, vice-president and general manager for business and regional avionics.

Included in the package are Falcon Media - providing the latest entertainment content - Falcon View, which interfaces with external cameras to give passengers a 360° view outside the jet, and the Falcon Cabin app, allowing a user to control all the cabin functions from a personal device.

In addition, the Falcon 6X is the first to feature new Bluetooth connectivity localised in each seat.

"We are hoping to bring customers the best experience we can when they

travelling," says Voight. "The reaction has been really positive so far - the feedback from Dassault and end-users is that it is really intuitive to use."

To date, Collins has delivered 53 Ambience systems to Dassault for installation on the Falcon 6X. It provides CMS across the French airframer's entire range.

Dassault's first delivery of the Falcon 6X went to Zurich-based Cat Aviation, which is operating the jet on behalf of an undisclosed private customer.

Helene Neidhart, chief executive of Cat Aviation, says the twinjet's entry into service has been flawless.

"I am very pleased with it. Surprisingly the aircraft is technically without problems - for me this is very special. Normally every aircraft has teething troubles but we have not found any," she says.

Neidhart is also a pilot and has accumulated over 1,000 flight hours, including a large number on the Falcon 7X trijet.

She says the ferry flight from Dassault's completion centre in Little Rock, Arkansas to Zurich was a revelation.

"It was exceptional - this is really a new-generation aircraft. You always think it is marketing but it's not. I think it is the best Falcon ever built."



Pictured in Vaeridion's cabin mockup (front): Markus Kochs-Camper and Van Dartel from Vaeridion with (back row) Aero-Dienst's Andre Ebach and Oliver Kosing

Electric ambulance

Business aviation and medical evacuation services provider Aero-Dienst is partnering with fellow German firm Vaeridion to study an air ambulance version of the start-up's proposed "microliner" nine-seat electric-powered aircraft. The venture will also see Aero Dienst develop a maintenance manual for the type's propulsion system and batteries.

Scheduled to enter service at the end of the decade, the microliner is a conventional high-wing

T-tail design. Its power unit comprises two or more battery-powered electric motors driving a single propeller. Ivor Van Dartel, Vaeridion's co-founder and chief executive, describes the model as "revolutionary, energy-efficient aircraft" offering "exceptional value for money on short-haul routes".

As well as an air ambulance, the 500km (270nm)-range aircraft will be offered in commercial and business aviation configurations. Belgium's

ASL Group and Copenhagen Air Taxi have also concluded agreements with Vaeridion to study passenger versions of the microliner.

"We are seeking to partner with a number of established companies who can provide valuable input on the Microliner's design based on their day-to-day operations. We want to get it right from the start," says Van Dartel.

Munich-based Vaeridion was founded in 2021. First flight of a conforming aircraft is slated for 2027.

Whatever the leather

Townsend Leather, which has been exhibiting at EBACE for more than 20 years, is based in upstate New York, and has made a name for itself creating custom interiors and coverings for business and private aircraft.

The high-performance upholstery leather stems from Germany but is manufactured at the company's US facility.

"We come here every year to support our representative in France and his customers here in Europe," says Sherry Cocker, the company's customer service lead (pictured).

"What makes us unique is that we manufacture the leather ourselves, we can do custom colours, embossings and custom logos, all in-house."



Crafting carpets

Pilar Wolfsteller

Judy Connolly (pictured), head of design at Dallas-based custom aircraft carpet-maker Kalogridis International, is an artist in a world of engineers.

"I'm in charge of making really pretty stuff," she says. "We specialize in hand-tufted VVIP cabin customization, over-the-top beautiful things," she says.

"We will service your aircraft floor in every way. The sky is the limit."

Connolly has a passion for undyed yarn in its raw form, which saves a great deal of water in the manufacturing process.

"Once you start dying, you have to fill up dye tanks with water and if you are ordering carpet for your aircraft that's quite a bit of water," she says.

"Designers want things to be just perfect, so the color

deviation is very small."

"Those are the things people don't really think about... they don't think about the environmental impact of the product like how much water you need to find the exact colour."

The family-run company has been in business for almost four decades and performs all steps of the design and manufacturing process in-house.

Pride in the profession

Lorenzo Gatti (pictured), board member of the non-profit European Pride in Aviation Network (EPAN), is impressed at the response and attention the advocacy group has enjoyed at this year's EBACE.

"We certainly have the most colourful booth here, that is for sure," he says.

The group, which is the European partner organisation of the US-based National Gay Pilots Association, has a stand at the show for the second year.

"We try to bring cooperation in aviation, representing the interests of the LGBTQ+ members of our community," says Gatti.

"Our members are cabin crew, ground personnel, air traffic controllers, pilots and allies of our association, and we create safe spaces for them, supporting them in their career and beyond."

EPAN also works on legislative solutions that are designed to promote diversity in an industry that traditionally been very male, very heteronormative, and very white.

"We've had about 10 fruitful meetings here so far," Gatti says. "We are setting up a network that benefits both our members and also corporations to bring these topics forward."



Far from uniform

Aviation uniforms used to be standard, plain and ill-fitting. But not anymore. Creation & Image, a 38-year-old Paris-based fashion house, specialises in carefully designing elegant bespoke uniforms for the discerning jet operator.

"We work with the client to choose the right colours, the ideal design for comfort, functionality, ease of care, and also to fit so many different body types," says Melissa Kohlbr, sales development manager at the company (pictured).

Creation & Image's product palette includes pilot and cabin crew uniforms.

"We can be very creative or very sober, whatever the customer needs," she adds.

In addition to the business and private jet segment, Creation & Image has also designed uniforms for Air Mauritius, Air France, and Gulf Air.



Help on hand

Business jet operators not only have to navigate some-times inclement weather conditions and busy airspace to complete each leg of a journey. In-flight medical emergencies and geopolitical crises can also greatly impact the success of a mission.

MedAire is an aviation-specific international assistance company for medical and security services, both in-flight and on the ground, and a crucial source of information for threats

that might impact an aviation operation.

"Our on-demand medical and security portal is a response to this perma-crisis that is happening all over the world - we have natural disasters, world crises, economic events, civil uprisings and wars between countries and regions," Chris Potter, the company's head of marketing (pictured), says.

MedAire is based in Phoenix, USA, but operates in 100 countries, with 28 assistance centres around

the world. It receives about 300 calls every day for in-flight medical emergencies and about 900 calls per day including in-flight and on-the-ground support, Potter says. Around 85% of air traffic uses MedAire's services, including more than 180 airlines.

At EBACE, the company has launched a new peer support programme which offers a targeted approach to mental health and well-being tailored for aviation professionals.

Let us spray

Basel-based Fiber Seal, founded in 1993, is exhibiting at EBACE for the first time. The company has specialised in carpet and textiles cleaning and leather refurbishment.

"We provide services exclusively for the private aviation sector," Adrian Loretz, chief executive of Fiber Seal (pictured), says. "If someone wants to bring their plane, they have an old leather interior, and they want to

restore and renew that, we do that for them."

The company has developed its own products and cleaning solutions for the work, but the know-how of the team is the company's most important asset.

"It's all about the craftsmanship, the experience of our technicians, to fix the colours, get the right tone, and restore the interior in a way to make it look like it looked before."



Moving metal

Aero Specialties supplies the industry with ground support equipment such as power units, tool-kits, and parts, for all types and sizes of aircraft.

The company also stocks a large assortment of TLD aircraft equipment - one model of which is prominently on display at the company's stand at this year's EBACE.

"This is the all-electric towbar-less tractor and designed for push back of most commuters, single aisle aircraft, and to move large cabin business aviation, regional and charter aircrafts," says Brad Streeter (pictured), chief executive of the Boise, Idaho-based company. The modular battery packs can be exchanged and re-used on different types of equipment, he adds.



Sferra: STOL version of P2012 will make no runway inaccessible

STOL story

Tecnam debuts Continental-powered P2012 and secures EASA step approach approval for short take-off and landing variant

Kate Sarsfield

Italian general aviation aircraft manufacturer Tecnam has returned to EBACE to debut the Continental GTSIO-520-S-powered version of its P2012 Traveller piston-twin.

Although lacking the FADEC of the standard Lycoming TEO-540 C1A-powered model, it is cheaper and offers better take-off and landing performance, says Francesco Sferra, P2012 sales and business development manager for special mission platforms.

The Continental-engined P2012 boasts a take-off dis-

tance of 682m (2,237ft) and a landing distance of 558m and delivers a range of 1,350nm (2,500km), against respective figures of the 790m, 743m and 1,000nm for the Lycoming-powered model.

In addition, the Continental engine drives a three-blade MT Propeller while the Lycoming powers MT's four-blade version. Both engine models are rated at 375hp (280kW).

"This aircraft will appeal to those operators who like to fly the classic models but really need the extra range and landing capabilities," says Sferra. The aircraft was announced in mid-2023 and is scheduled to enter service

with an unnamed commercial customer in the third quarter.

"This customer has two aircraft on order, both of which we expect to hand over by the end of September," says Sferra.

Tecnam also announced during the show that the short take-off and landing (STOL) version of the P2012 has received European Union Aviation Safety Agency certification for steep approaches of up to 10°.

Launched in March 2023, the first examples of the 11-seater were handed over in early May to Seychelles operator Island Development Company. A further three units are scheduled for delivery in

the next quarter to Caribbean carrier St Barth Executive.

Sferra says that, with the latest approval, "there is no inaccessible runway for the P2012 STOL".

Tecnam implemented a series of modifications to achieve the STOL performance, including a 2.6m (8.5ft) extension to the wing, growing wingspan to 16.6m from 14m on the base-line model, dedicated flaps and updated flight controls. As a result, take-off distance is 425m and landing distance 360m.

The market for small commercial STOL operations is largely served by single-engined turboprops such as

the Cessna Caravan and Daher Kodiak series, and the ageing Britten-Norman BN2 Islander twin.

"The single-engined types lack the versatility of piston-twins, but the P2012 is the only aircraft in this niche to have been developed since the 1960s," says Sferra.

Tecnam believes the addressable market for the P2012 STOL "runs into the thousands". "This aircraft fully loaded will be able to access some of the shortest runways and unpaved trips in the world, not only served by charter and commercial operators but also by private owners," says Sferra.



D'Amico: Now delivering a lot more capacity

The power of one

Satellite communications provider Viasat is at this year's EBACE with a significantly expanded global-in-flight connectivity portfolio after acquiring competitor Inmarsat last year.

"This is one company now," says Viasat vice-president of strategic engagements Claudio D'Amico. "What Inmarsat brought to us is the global coverage, the consistency and reliability, along with a large installed base."

The companies both operated satellites and sold, among other products, in-flight data transmission services using their satellite networks. The systems include the technology and onboard hardware that make in-flight wi-fi possible.

Based in Carlsbad, California, Viasat has long been a leading provider of connectivity over the Ka-band, a wide-bandwidth section of the electromagnetic spectrum that allows for fast data-transfer speeds. It has operated Ka-band networks covering

North America, Europe, and other regions.

Legacy Inmarsat also had a Ka-band in-flight product but notably also offered more global coverage with an L-band product. That part of the spectrum is less susceptible to interference, making for more reliable data transfer.

Viasat closed the acquisition on 31 May 2023. The deal brought under Viasat's wing some 1,600 business aircraft with Inmarsat's Ka-band product and 3,500 aircraft with its L-band offering, says D'Amico. "It brought a lot of scale to Viasat business aviation."

Viasat is now preparing to launch an updated, improved-performance L-band product called SwiftJet. It aims to begin delivering SwiftJet, which includes onboard hardware supplied by Honeywell, by year-end.

"What we are bringing to the market is the continued reliability that the L-band system delivers, but with a lot more capacity," D'Amico says.



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Scalabrini: Seeing considerable growth in international markets

VistaJet spreading its wings

Kate Sarsfield

High-end charter provider and EBACE regular VistaJet is expanding its footprint outside its traditional territories of Europe and the USA.

"While these are our largest and strongest markets, we are seeing considerable growth in international markets, particularly Africa, India and the Middle East," says Philippe Scalabrini, VistaJet's president of sales,

Europe. VistaJet has been flying into those markets for some time for established international customers, but there are now increasing opportunities from local businesses and high net worth individuals who wish to travel internationally and trans-continently, he says. In the first quarter of 2024, VistaJet recorded in Africa a 69% increase in Global 7500 flight hours alone and a 91% climb in programme members compared with the first quarter of 2023. Business aviation has become a valu-

able tool in a country where internal airline services are poor, he says. VistaJet has a fleet of three Bombardier Challenger 605s in Africa, but Scalabrini is confident the region can absorb up to 25 large-cabin jets in the next few years. "There are huge opportunities here," he says.

Similarly, VistaJet is seeing strong growth in India where it has based two VT-registered aircraft – a Challenger 605 and super-large Global 500 to cater for the local demand.

The Middle East too is seeing strong, consistent growth particularly in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf countries. Scalabrini says the Fifa World Cup in Qatar in 2022 helped drive large numbers of new customers to VistaJet. "We attracted many first-time users of business aviation during the event, and many have stayed with us," says Scalabrini.

VistaJet recently completed the refurbishment and rebranding of some 100 business jets into its cabin design and silver and red exterior. These were acquired in 2022 through the acquisition by parent company Vista Global of Germany's Air Hamburg and Jet Edge of the USA.

The operators have since been renamed VistaJet GmbH and VistaJet America. "These aircraft have swelled VistaJet's branded fleet to over 300 business jets ranging from the superlight Cessna Citation XLS to the Bombardier Global 7500," says Scalabrini.

VistaJet is the world's largest operator of Bombardier business jets with over 100 aircraft including 18 ultra-long-range Global 7500s, but recent acquisitions have brought other makes into the group's worldwide fleet.

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Titan pumps up Spanish SAF supply

Titan Aviation Fuels International is expanding its distribution of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) to buyers in Europe, citing increased demand for the fuel despite SAF remaining expensive and in short supply.

The aviation fuel provider has added five SAF distribution sites in Spain and is working with energy company Cepsa to make more of the fuel available in Barcelona, Malaga, Madrid, Palma, and Seville.

"We are seeing more demand for sustainable aviation fuel from our customers, but supply remains a challenge in Europe, making it difficult to source. The limited supply and demand also affect price," says Titan chief executive Daniel Coetzer.

Geneva-based Titan Aviation Fuels International is an arm of US firm Titan Aviation Fuels.

"Titan Aviation Fuels recognises the importance of sustainability for European operators, owners and customers, and is committed to supporting the industry's ambitious plans to manage and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions," the company says.

PC-24 is back in latest guise



Bucher: India has massive potential

Kate Sarsfield

Eleven years after unveiling its PC-24 to great fanfare at EBACE, Pilatus is debuting the second iteration of the superlight business jet on the static.

This model on display (MSN 501, HB-VGA) is the first example of the second-generation PC-24, which the Swiss airframer has been using since January as a company aircraft and corporate demonstrator.

Pilatus has since delivered over a dozen models including the first two of six examples to Indian launch

customer Adani Group.

Unveiled in October last year and certificated at the end of 2023, the aircraft features a host of enhancements including a roomier cabin with a new integrated cabin management system, a 272kg (600lb) increase in maximum payload to 1,410kg. Range grows by 200nm (370km) to 2,000nm, and maximum take-off weight increases by 200kg to 8,500kg.

"We redesigned over 1,000 parts to make the aircraft lighter, and reach those performance goals," says Pilatus Aircraft chief executive Markus Bucher. "But because of this process we

cannot offer these improvements to existing customers as a retrofit package."

Since the PC-24 entered service in 2018, 230 have been delivered. "We maintained for many years that in order for the aircraft to get traction worldwide we would need a fleet of around 200 aircraft," says Bucher. "I have revised that number to 500."

He suggests while the PC-24 has been very popular in the USA, Europe and Australia - where the Royal Flying Doctor Service uses five air ambulance-configured examples along with 49 PC-12 single-engined turboprops - it has not made

inroads elsewhere.

"We are hoping that will change," says Bucher. Pilatus is targeting Asia and India which Bucher describes as "potentially huge" markets. There are two PC-24s in service in Japan. A further four will be delivered to Adani in India this year. "India has massive potential due to its growing numbers of high-net-worth individuals and successful businesses," Bucher says, adding that he expects the conglomerate's high-profile brand will give Pilatus exposure in the country. He has a similar expectation for China, which is home to 30 PC-12s.

Opul equips with Starlink

London-based aircraft charter and service provider Opul Jets is equipping its fleet with SpaceX's Starlink satellite-based broadband internet service, giving passengers access to higher-speed inflight wi-fi.

Opul will initially install the system on its Bombardier Global Express XRS ultra-long-range jets, with the first of those expected to be flying with the wi-fi update this month, the company says.

Opul owns its fleet and uses partner companies to operate them. Its fleet also includes Learjet 40s.

The Starlink service allows for download speeds of 400-220 Mbps and uploads at 8-25 Mbps.

Azzera helps track SAF

Technology provider Azzera has rolled out a service allowing business-aircraft operators to track and manage their use of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and to estimate their emission savings.

The company, which provides a range of sustainability tracking and consulting services, is showcasing its new SAF inventory management and tracking system at EBACE.

The feature is available

through Azzera's Celeste system, a subscription software service that measures emission reductions and tracks compliance with government standards.

"With the SAF data stored in a single module, Celeste users can optimise the system to increase visibility around their use of SAF, as the module tracks where the SAF is purchased, how much is uplifted and which routes were flown," Azzera says.

For Gogo Business Aviation, 2024 is stacking up to be one of the most pivotal years in the company's illustrious history



Beyond speed, key considerations when choosing an inflight connectivity provider

While Gogo continues to make progress with its 5G service in North America, for operators in Europe and elsewhere around the globe, the company is set to launch Gogo Galileo, its new global broadband satellite service, later this year - and Gogo believes it will be a game-changer for the industry.

"Gogo Galileo, with the HDX antenna, stands to revolutionize business aviation inflight connectivity by delivering a broadband solution for aircraft of all sizes, especially small jets, which have limited options today, and no broadband options outside North America," said Sergio Aguirre (pictured), Gogo's president and COO. "We will begin flight testing with the HDX terminal this summer and everything is progressing as we expected."

At the end of March, Gogo announced it had achieved a major milestone with Gogo Galileo when it completed an end-to-end connection using the HDX antenna on the Eutelsat OneWeb Low-Earth-Orbit (LEO) satellite network. It was the first major step required for the company to prove

the functionality of the antenna with the network, and ultimately the entire Gogo Galileo ecosystem, including the AVANCE LRU.

"We're making tremendous progress with Gogo Galileo, which is expected to provide an office-like experience in the sky to meet the high expectations for fast inflight connectivity with very low latency thanks to the transformative power of LEO satellite connectivity," Aguirre continued. "There are about 14,000 business aircraft that operate all around the world that are either regional aircraft in Europe, Latin America, or Asia, and Gogo Galileo will serve the entire breadth of business aviation from the smallest business jets all the way up to large-cabin aircraft."

Speaking of transformative services, there's more to consider than fast data speeds and low latency when it comes to choosing which inflight connectivity system is the best fit for your aircraft. Ask yourself the following questions: Does the company have a history of proven, reliable performance for business aviation aircraft? Is the company committed to business aviation

for the long term? Does it have aviation-grade equipment and a network built to serve aviation, with guaranteed service-level agreements? And what kind of customer support will you receive if something goes wrong?

"When you're making the kind of investment - both with the time for the installation and financially - to add inflight connectivity to your aircraft, you can't afford to make the wrong choice," said Aguirre. "Gogo does one thing: inflight connectivity for business aviation, and we do it very well. Our singular focus on business aviation means no compromises. Your inflight connectivity is our only concern. We're not looking to add millions of customers in other verticals - we're focused only on business aviation. And we provide award-winning customer support from real people who are experts in this industry, and they are available 24/7/365, including every major holiday."

And Gogo also offers some unique benefits to operators, like Gogo Vision - the industry's only inflight entertainment service offering hundreds of movies and TV programs, a 3D moving map, 30 leading magazines in digital format, and business news - as well as over-the-air (OTA) software updates to keep all Gogo AVANCE LRUs current with the latest technology.

"Recently, we implemented over-the-air software updates for our AVANCE systems which was an incredible achievement by our team," said Aguirre. "AVANCE customers can now receive automatic updates to their system software, for one aircraft or an entire fleet, from anywhere in the world, over the air. For a fleet operator like NetJets, for example, the benefits are immense. OTA saves a lot of downtime because updates occur automatically, and it provides tremendous savings in time and manpower because those updates, that previously had to be done manually by someone going on board an aircraft, one at a time, now those are done automatically all at once. No one else in business aviation can update their system software so efficiently."

To demo the Gogo Galileo service, visit Gogo at stand AD26 at the static display area.



AVANCE now benefits from over-the-air updates

The latest satellite networks deliver powerful benefits to business aviation



Unlocking the benefits of Low-Earth-Orbit satellite communications

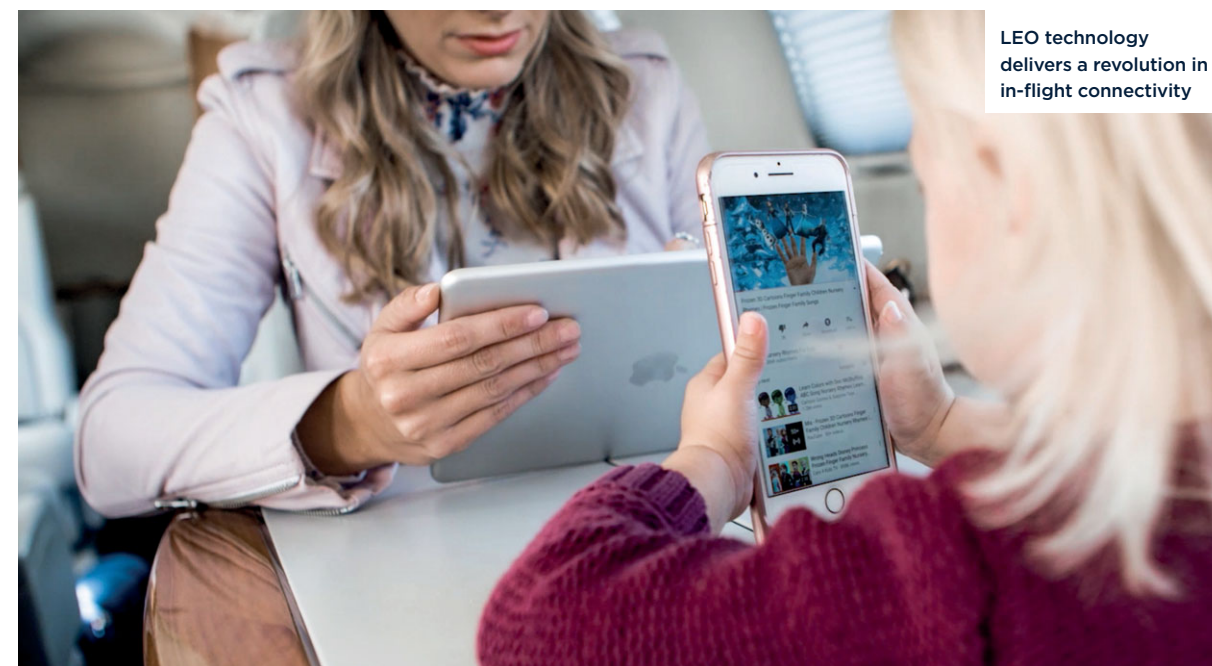
In an increasingly interconnected world, communication is paramount to every aspect of our lives. Low-Earth-Orbit (LEO) satellite communications networks have emerged as a transformative technology, offering numerous benefits across a variety of sectors. In fact, for business aviation, LEO constellations are about to change everything.

Gogo Business Aviation's new Gogo Galileo service is leveraging the power of LEO technology to bring broadband inflight connectivity – for the first time – to every business aircraft worldwide, regardless of the size or mission of the aircraft.

There are several significant advantages LEO satellite networks provide to business aviation operators compared to the more traditional geostationary (GEO) satellite networks: superfast broadband Wi-Fi, low latency, smaller on-board hardware and antennas, true global coverage with no degradation even over polar routes, affordability, and the ability to scale with new technologies as they emerge, to name just a few.

TRUE GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY

LEO satellites orbit the Earth at altitudes ranging from 160 to 2,000 kilometers, significantly closer than traditional geostationary satellites which sit roughly 33,000 kilometers from Earth. The closer proximity enables faster data transmission and lower latency, for unparalleled global connectivity. LEO networks are an ideal fit for business aviation aircraft because they don't require as much power to communicate with the satellites,



LEO technology delivers a revolution in in-flight connectivity

which enables the use of electronically steerable antennas (ESAs) which are compact enough to fit on smaller aircraft, including super-light jets and turboprops.

LOW LATENCY

One of the most significant advantages of LEO satellite communications is reduced latency. Unlike GEO satellites, which orbit at much higher altitudes, LEO satellites can achieve roundtrip latencies dramatically less than GEO systems can achieve. This near-instantaneous communication is crucial for applications such as online gaming, video conferencing, and financial transactions, where even slight delays can have an impact.

SCALABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY

LEO satellite constellations are highly scalable and flexible, allowing for rapid deployment and expansion of communication networks. By launching hundreds of small satellites, operators can easily increase coverage and capacity to meet growing demand, something GEO networks simply can't do based on their size and the expense of launching each satellite.

RESILIENCE AND REDUNDANCY

LEO networks offer resilience and redundancy, ensuring continuous communication even in the face of potential infrastructure failures or disruptions. By distributing satellites across multiple orbital planes, LEO constellations minimize the impact of individual satellite failures or orbital debris collisions. This level of resilience and redundancy is invaluable for business aviation operators.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Compared to GEO satellites, LEO constellations have lower environmental impact due to their smaller size and shorter operational lifetimes. Additionally, advancements in propulsion technology enable LEO satellites to deorbit at the end of their missions, reducing space debris and minimizing the risk of collisions. As society increasingly prioritizes sustainability, LEO satellite communications offer a more environmentally friendly solution for global inflight connectivity.

ENABLING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

LEO networks play a pivotal role in enabling emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and augmented reality. By providing ubiquitous connectivity, LEO satellites facilitate seamless integration of new technologies, driving innovation and unlocking new opportunities across industries. Eventually, LEO networks will form the backbone of the digital infrastructure powering the Fourth Industrial Revolution on the ground, and for business aviation it ensures the latest technological advancements will be more immediately available.

THE BOTTOM LINE

LEO satellite networks represent a paradigm shift in the way we connect and communicate. With their global coverage, reduced latency, scalability, resilience, and environmental sustainability, LEO networks offer a host of benefits that were previously unavailable. As technology continues to evolve, LEO technology will play an increasingly central role in shaping the future of inflight connectivity, innovation, and progress. ▶



LEO satellites orbit from 160 to 2,000km



Ian Pearson joins Gogo Business Aviation staff in Europe

Ian Pearson recently joined Gogo Business Aviation as a senior manager overseeing avionics technology business development, sales and strategic partnerships. Pearson is based in the U.K. and will have an initial focus on Europe, eventually pursuing opportunities in other strategic locations internationally.

Pearson is an aviation industry veteran, bringing 35 years of experience to Gogo across a variety of roles and responsibilities in business,

civil, military and commercial aviation. He brings a wealth of inflight connectivity background and experience to his new post after spending the past 12 years with Satcom Direct (SD), most recently serving as director of technology and strategic partnerships – a role he held from 2017-2024.

Prior to that, he served as an international business development manager, product manager and senior manager of key accounts and technology with SD. He's also worked for Honeywell Aerospace/EMS Aviation and Collins Aerospace.

Gogo Galileo providing new partnership opportunities in Europe

Gogo Business Aviation has a history of innovation spanning more than 30 years. Throughout that time, Gogo has built a sterling reputation as the most trusted provider of inflight connectivity with a singular focus on business aviation and award-winning customer service.

Today, Gogo is the world's largest provider of broadband connectivity services for business aviation with a network of nearly 120 authorized dealers, approximately 25 of which are based in Europe and more coming on board.

"We're actively working to expand our dealer network in Europe and in other strategic locations worldwide," said Shuaib Shahid, Gogo's head of international sales. "We're looking at partners who can help open new territories we aren't reaching today and with service centers that work on aircraft types that are a good fit for our Gogo Galileo HDX system including midsize aircraft and smaller."

EUROPEAN STCS FOR GOGO GALILEO

Gogo Galileo is the company's new global broadband service that uses the latest electronically steerable antenna (ESA) technology connecting to Low-Earth-Orbit (LEO) satellites.

In April, Gogo announced the first European Supplemental Type Certificates (STCs) being developed in conjunction with Germany-based Atlas Air Service AG, Europe's largest maintenance specialist.

The initial European STCs for the Gogo Galileo HDX antenna are being developed for the Cessna Citation 525 series of light jet aircraft, with another STC for the Embraer Phenom 300. Those STCs will cover more than 2,600 total aircraft in operation today worldwide, comprised of more than 1,850 Citations and 750 Phenom 300s.

"We're seeing a lot of interest in our Gogo Galileo HDX solution and the fact that the first agreements are on some of the smallest aircraft in the market

reiterates the fact that our strategy is sound and that the HDX system is a good fit for operators outside North America," said Shahid. "Innovation is in our DNA and Gogo Galileo represents a huge change for the industry. There's nothing else like it available today.

"To put it into perspective, once the CJ1+ gets the Gogo Galileo system installed, it will outperform just about any other aircraft in Europe including much larger aircraft that have a GEO system onboard," he continued. "That's a significant change we're bringing to the industry."

SMALL FORM FACTOR WITH EASE OF INSTALLATION

Highlighting the small form factor and ease of installation, beginning in April, Atlas Air Service is focusing its initial STC on the Cessna Citation 525 series of aircraft encompassing the CJ1, CJ2, CJ3, and CJ4, with hardware installations expected this summer on the CJ1+. The STC for the Phenom 300 is being developed in parallel with the Citation STC through the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and validated with other agencies worldwide.

"For the first time ever, a true global broadband service will be available to thousands of aircraft operators in Europe and around the world," said Radu Grigore, deputy director of MRO commercial for Atlas Air Service AG. "For many years our customers have been asking for a small and affordable broadband solution for their aircraft. We wanted to be among the first to partner with Gogo to develop these STCs and bring true broadband inflight Wi-Fi for every segment of business aviation."

Gogo has the Atlas Air Service CJ1+ available for in-person demos here at the static display, located at AD26.

Gogo Galileo will operate on the Eutelsat OneWeb LEO satellite network, which is aviation-grade and fully deployed. ▶



First Galileo HDX European STCs are for Citation 525 series jets



gogo BUSINESS AVIATION



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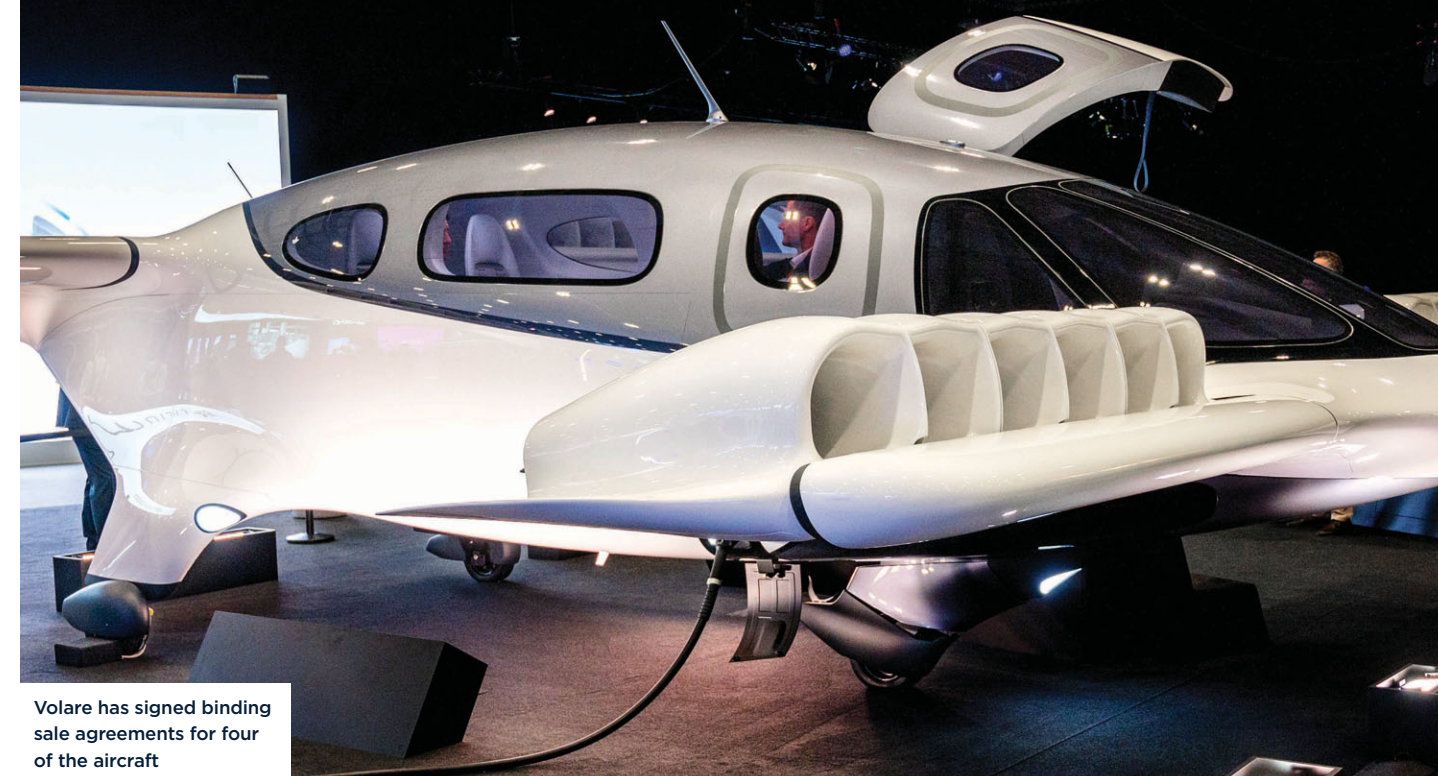
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Lilium Jet 'in service by mid-2026'



Volare has signed binding sale agreements for four of the aircraft

Dominic Perry

Lilium chief executive Klaus Roewe says he is confident the German company will hit its target of service entry for the developmental Lilium Jet by the middle of 2026. Although the Bavar-

ia-based firm has yet to fly a full-scale version of its electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft, it has two production-conforming prototypes in final assembly at its Wessling headquarters, paving the way for a manned first flight by the end of the year. That will lead to a flight-

test campaign lasting around 18 months, says Roewe, during which a six-strong fleet will accumulate some 900h in pursuit of European Union Aviation Safety Agency certification. Service entry is targeted for mid-2026.

Roewe, a former Airbus A320 programme chief,

believes the proposed timeline is solid. "Doing it in 18 months - I am not feeling comfortable, but I am feeling confident," he says.

While Lilium "could propose something more sporty", his experience running aircraft development programmes suggests

"you will learn something [during flight test] that forces you to redesign" either software or hardware.

"We want to say what we do and do what we say," Roewe adds. "You have to build trust - when someone buys your plane you are together for the next 20 years and you don't want to start your relationship by cheating."

Meanwhile, Lilium has unveiled a series of agreements deepening its relationships with customers and infrastructure providers.

UK-based eVolare - an eVTOL brand of Oxford-based management and charter specialist Volare - has signed deposit-backed "binding sale and purchase agreements" for four Lilium Jets and has agreed terms for the reservation of another 12 production slots. It builds on an

initial agreement signed by the pair in 2022 covering 20 aircraft.

Lilium has also announced an expansion of its partnership with Luxembourg-based Luxaviation Group, which will see the company's ExecuJet subsidiary develop electrified ground infrastructure for the Lilium Jet initially across its network of European fixed-base operations, with further sites in the Middle East planned.

Separately, the company has signed a three-way pact with Italian vertiport operator UrbanV and Aeroports de la Cote d'Azur - operator of Nice airport - to create a vertiport network across the French Riviera.

Drone diagnosis

The Swiss Federal Office of Civil Aviation has approved Jet Aviation's use of automated drone and artificial intelligence technology for exterior aircraft inspections.

The technology has been approved for general visual inspections, a regulated maintenance check used to identify defects on the outside surfaces of the aircraft. The drone inspection can create a "full visual record" of the external surfaces.

The inspections are available for regulated inspections on most business jets, including the Gulfstream G280, G550 and G650 and some narrow- and wide-body aircraft.

"With this approval, Jet Aviation is now able to perform these checks with its automated drone and AI technology, resulting in a detailed paperless report for the customer and main-

tenance teams, in turn driving efficiency and reducing downtime for pre-purchase inspections," the company said earlier this week at EBACE.

Vincent Rongier, Jet Aviation's vice-president business operation support, hails the approval as a "significant milestone" for the firm.

"As we continue to challenge ourselves to reimagine business aviation, and grow our services, we can provide ground-breaking solutions for even the most challenging inspections, and offer new, innovative services centered around predictive maintenance," he adds.

Jet Aviation launched automated drone and AI technology last year for non-regulated services such as paint quality checks and inspections for insurance or warranty cases.



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A new Biggin-ing



Report concluded airport contributed £200 million to UK economy last year

Murdo Morrison

Biggin Hill Airport is back at EBACE amid an infrastructure investment spree at the south-east London business aviation gateway.

The privately owned airport is redeveloping two of its hangars as demand from clients for covered aircraft parking and other activities grows, says commercial director Robert Walters. It also plans to resurface its

runway next year.

This follows the opening of a 56-bedroom airport-owned hotel in 2023, and the unveiling the previous year of a new Bombardier maintenance hangar, the largest such facility in Europe.

Biggin Hill has also been increasing its provision of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) in a tie-up with Air BP. "We were the first GA airport to sell SAF from our fuel farm. Our idea is that we will continue to build

demand and, with it, our capacity to supply SAF," says Walters, who adds that as usage has increased the price has come down - it is now just 25% more expensive than conventional fuel.

However, it has not all been good news for Biggin Hill. In common with most business aviation airports, traffic in 2024 has fallen year-on-year and 2023 was itself down on the previous year.

However, the airport's expected 20,000 annual

movements are still significantly ahead of the pre-pandemic period, as a result of a surge in the popularity of business aviation charters during 2021 and 2022.

Biggin Hill is in intense competition with its London-market rivals Farnborough and Luton, and to a lesser extent City, Oxford, and Stansted. However, Walters says the fact that the runway opens at 0630, earlier than most of its competitors, gives it the edge when it comes to attracting

transatlantic business. "Our US traffic builds very much in the summer because of this advantage," he states.

Earlier this month, Biggin Hill commissioned a report from Lichfields that concluded that the airport and its associated businesses contributed £200 million (\$253 million) to the UK economy in 2023, and supported almost 2,700 full-time equivalent jobs, including 1,760 directly at the airport - an 80% increase since 2012.

ACA steps up battle against illegal charters

The Air Charter Association is at EBACE to promote two recruitment and training initiatives and raise awareness of its effort to stamp out illegal charters.

The UK-based body, which is 75 years old, represents brokers and providers of air charter services, in the non-scheduled cargo and airline sectors as well as business aviation. It has 425 members across almost 60 countries with a total of 200,000 employees.

The ACA has long pressed for tougher action to combat so-called grey charters, but its Fly Legal campaign gained impetus after the 2019 crash that killed Cardiff City Argentinian footballer Emiliano Sala and his pilot, who did not have an air operator's certificate permitting him to carry paying passengers.

The ACA has designated



Hogben: Making training more accessible to global membership

the annual date of Sala's death, 21 January, as Fly Legal Day.

The ACA is also unveiling at the show its first online broker training course,

which it will offer this year as an alternative to attending an in-person course, most of which are in Germany or the UK. The initiative will "make our training

much more accessible to our growing global membership", says chief executive Glenn Hogben.

The association's training offer is part of a wider accreditation scheme that Hogben says ensures brokers in its member companies work to the highest professional standards.

The ACA has also just launched an internship scheme, which offers 18 to 25 year olds subsidised training and a week's work experience at a member company. The first group of 20 individuals will start in August, and Hogben hopes a similar number can go through the programme each year. "It's a way of ensuring that new talent is coming into the industry," he says.

See P18 for a special feature on the campaign to stamp out illegal charters

Gama on go in Sharjah

Gama Aviation has passed a "major milestone" in its new fixed-base operation project at Sharjah in the UAE.

The operator, which is exhibiting at EBACE, has completed a 36,000sq m (388,000sq ft) parking apron ahead of the scheduled opening of the facility in the second quarter of 2025.

The FBO will include a "VVIP terminal", 14,000sq m air-conditioned hangar, and "enhanced MRO facilities".

Gama says its existing premises at the airport remain open during the work.

Sharjah - Dubai's neighbour - offers an alternative to Al Maktoum airport (DWC), south of Dubai. The authorities in the larger emirate have been discouraging business jet operators from using the closer but near-capacity Dubai International (DXB), home to Emirates and the city's main commercial aviation gateway.

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How can the industry best tackle the illegal charter market?



Sala's death shocked the worlds of football and aviation

Removing the greys

Kate Sarsfield

Five years have passed since the crash of a Piper Malibu Mirage off the coast of Guernsey in the Channel Islands ended the life of Argentinian footballer Emiliano Sala and his pilot David Ibbotson. The young English Premier League star, who was travelling from Nantes in France to Wales where he had been signed by Cardiff City, was the only passenger on N264DB – a US-registered 1984 PA-46-310P piston-powered pressurised piston-single.

In its final report into the crash, published in March 2020, the UK Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) concluded that Sala – whose remains were retrieved from the aircraft wreckage on the seabed on 6 February 2019 – had potentially lethal levels of carbon monoxide in his blood. This poisonous gas may also have incapacitated Ibbotson, but his body has never been found.

Essentially, the report established that Ibbotson had received a fee to transport Sala despite only holding a private pilot's licence, which is

a blatant breach of regulations. Under European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) rules if a flight is operated for hire and reward it is classified as an air taxi service and must be approved by the relevant aviation authority to carry passengers. The aircraft must also be approved for this role and piloted by professionally trained crew and under an air operator certificate (AOC). Critically this incident revealed Ibbotson did not hold a commercial pilot's licence, and neither was he qualified to fly in instrument flight rules conditions at night. Furthermore, his type rating for the Malibu had expired. "This was a textbook case of an illegal charter," says Glenn Hogben, chief executive of charter industry body, the Air Charter Association (ACA).

This tragedy attracted international media attention and put the perils of illegal or grey charter under the spotlight. "After years of trying to alert and protect unwary travellers to the dangers of illicit operations, it took the tragic death of a famous, young football star to thrust the practice

into the headlines," says Hogben.

Justice for the victims was relatively swift. David Henderson, who set up the doomed flight, was found guilty in a UK court in October 2021 of endangering the safety of an aircraft and sentenced to 18 months in prison. At the trial, prosecutors described Henderson's aircraft management business as "a cowboy outfit" that did not have an AOC, and repeatedly breached rules governing commercial flights.

Carbon monoxide detectors

There were also small wins from the tragedy, however, in particular the mandating by the CAA of carbon monoxide detectors in small piston aircraft.

Hogben says the industry's efforts to raise awareness of illegal charter gained traction for some time after the crash.

The campaign was supported by the CAA which communicated with football clubs and other sporting bodies whose players and staff are regular users of private aircraft to stress the importance of using bona fide, licensed operations.

"This approach seems to

have worked as we haven't had any incidents in the sports transportation arena – so far at least," says Hogben.

The biggest challenge in combatting illegal charter is identifying when it is happening, he concedes: "We know it still goes on but to what extent is questionable."

Marc Bailey, chief executive of the British Business and General Aviation Association (BBGA), believes illegal activity is most likely to occur at the lower end of the market "dominated by small propeller-driven aircraft", and it is here the regulators "should be placing a greater focus".

He points to two accidents since the Sala tragedy that bore all the hallmarks of grey charter. The first involved a French registered PA-46 that overran the runway at Corcheval mountain airfield in France on 8 February 2019 – less than three weeks after Sala's demise – injuring one of the passengers. The second involved a PA-32 Cherokee Six piston-single which plummeted into the sea of Pompiere, Saintes Island, Guadeloupe on 1 December 2023. All five occupants were killed.

In an effort to keep the harmful reality of illegal charter in the spotlight, the ACA launched in 2022 an annual event in honour of Sala. Called Fly Legal Day, the fixture is held on the anniversary of the crash (21 January). ACA's 400 members and industry colleagues are encouraged to highlight the dangers of illicit charter.

Fly Legal Day is getting more engagement year-on-year with companies, organisations, associations and aviation authorities in Asia, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and the USA helping to promote the "fly safely message" to industry and end users. The US Federal Aviation Administration picked up the theme this year as part of its purge on grey charter operators.

Campaign messaging is communicated digitally to influence as wide an audience as possible. "We are particularly trying to reach first-time or very occasional users of business aviation who book travel via the internet and don't understand the difference between a commercial and private operation," says Hogben.

Operational risk

In short, an AOC holder takes all of the operational risk of public transport and is responsible if something goes wrong. For private owners or pilots who allow their aircraft to be used for illegal public charter that risk and liability remains with them. Crucially, if a flight is performed illegally, it could invalidate any otherwise applicable insurance coverage including the passenger's own life insurance. "There is no oversight or protection with a private operation," Hogben stresses.

The grey charter scourge has intensified over the past decade with the arrival of the digital charter marketplace. This has opened the sector to a plethora of new business models. Of particular concern to many in the industry is the cost-sharing market. The principle of cost-sharing – also known as ride or flight-sharing – is that passengers contribute towards a private pilot's direct costs such as aircraft hire, fuel and landing fees on a predetermined trip. The flight cannot be made for personal gain.

"We fully support the principle of cost sharing in its purest sense – where pilots can split their costs with friends or family to build their hours and get their training – as it's a great benefit to our industry," says BBGA's Bailey.

But some pilots, he argues, are "broadening their interpretation of cost-sharing" to include aircraft maintenance, repairs and other amortisation costs. "They become businesses if you pass these costs on to passengers, and you are therefore facilitating illegal charter," Bailey says.

Hogben agrees: "The challenge with cost-sharing is it almost encourages pilots to drift into the murky world of illegal flights. There's a perception among the travelling public that every aircraft is safe; the rules that apply to an EasyJet flight are the same as for a small private aircraft," he says.

"The reality is that it's not the case. They are very, very different

The ACA has launched a campaign against illegal charters

operations and very, very different aircraft."

Robert Baltus, chief operating officer with the European Business Aviation Association (EBAA), believes the problem has been exacerbated by the growth of online ride-sharing platforms, such as Wingly.

"I appreciate that pilots want to build their hours, but it's a different ball game when it comes to advertising your availability online to a wide audience," he says.

Paris-headquartered Wingly is the largest and oldest flight-sharing platform in the world. Since setting up in 2015 it has attracted 435,000 registered members across Europe – including 20,000 pilots – and has facilitated 100,000 flights.

A typical aircraft on Wingly is a four-seat piston single such as a Cessna 172, Diamond DA40 or a Piper PA-28 although the site does accommodate non-complex six-seat aircraft.

Wingly declines to comment on industry concerns around cost-sharing, although its website reassuringly states the algorithm developed for the platform does not allow amounts paid by any passenger to exceed the pro-rata share of the allowable shared costs. These include aircraft rental, fuel and airport landing and tie-down costs associated with the trip.

Unjustified

Martin Robinson, chief executive of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, believes the criticism levelled at cost-sharing in general and Wingly in particular is unjustified. He argues the sector has many positive benefits for general aviation, and there is scant data in terms of prosecutions to demonstrate how widespread illegal charter is facilitated by cost-sharing. "This concept has been around for decades, and Wingly has years' worth of data with no fatalities," Robinson notes.

Nevertheless, the CAA has sought to address the business aviation community's concerns around this segment.

Following public consultations and recommendations from an internal working group, the regulator has sought to strengthen the rules that it inherited from EASA after Brexit. Proposals include:

Requiring pilots to clearly state the start and end locations for each flight as part of their advertisement. Limiting pilots to only advertise flights that they intend to operate and to specify the date.

The CAA is also considering mandates for pilots to declare the type of licence and medical certificate they hold as well as their flying experience in hours.

Striking the right balance

Michael MacDonald, the CAA's co-head of general aviation, says the regulation is committed to "striking the right balance between protecting the public and allowing pilots to reap the benefits of sharing flight costs". He describes the new measures – which still have to be adopted into law by the UK government – as "vital in enabling people to make fully informed decisions when entering into cost sharing arrangements online".

EBAA's Baltus welcomes the CAA's approach to tackling the "grey charter scourge" among private flyers. "We would like EASA to consider these proposals, but business and general aviation is low down its list of priorities – largely because the industry has a great safety record. There is no sense of urgency," he says.

To help stamp out illegal charter, the ACA, CAA and EBAA among others have established online reporting tools to record suspicious activity. These mechanisms have been well received, but their effectiveness is questionable. Hogben cites a reluctance from some in the industry to report illicit

charters for fear of losing business.

"There is an unwillingness to report clients that they are dependent on for revenue such as landing or handling fees," says Hogben. The only way to change this culture is to continue raise awareness of the dangers associated with illegal charter "and to emphasise how these flights are taking valuable business and revenue away from legitimate operators", he maintains.

Hogben's views are supported by Alex Durand, chief executive of UK charter and management company SaxonAir. He describes the process of maintaining an AOC as "punishingly expensive".

"We have a full airline infrastructure [including two AOCs] for our 14-strong helicopter and jet fleet, but many AOC holders are small businesses. It's hard to maintain a critical mass of aircraft to make them viable against the high infrastructure and postholder costs," he says.

Loophole

To avoid the costs and restrictive operating regulations associated with public transport operations, Durand says a loophole has developed under the auspices of dry leasing. Under these rules, he explains, the aircraft and crew are leased separately to the passenger who then becomes the operator for the day taking responsibility for the aircraft.

"This keeps the costs down and more importantly allows the aircraft to operate under the less restrictive private regulations opening up airports and airfields that they would not be able to access public transport rules," says Durand.

This is particularly appealing for turboprop operators who want to take full advantage of their short take-off and landing capabilities. Enhanced safety measures for commercial operators require more than one and half times the runway length of their private counterparts.

Durand describes these day leasing operations as "legal but unethical".

The problem, he suggests, is that passengers get on board a flight that's "probably quite professionally operated, but this creates an illusion that they have the safety and legal protections they actually don't have".

Durand is not convinced the dial has shifted greatly on illegal charter since the Sala tragedy. "We continue to use the language we had before that accident, whereas we need a different approach," he says.

The solution for Durand lies with insurance cover. Industry could lobby insurers, he says, to add wording in policies to exclude liability, or for policy holders to accept liability for, any flight that is subsequently found to have been non-compliant with the regulations. "Put the onus on the policy holder to confirm legality, instead of assuming legal operations unless proven otherwise," says Durand.

For Bailey the answer is to introduce more proportionate regulations tailored to the size and scope of each operation. This will help to drive down the price of charter and discourage illicit flights, he argues. ■

Long waiting times for new widebodies mean government customers are choosing to refit existing fleets, which is good news for the completions market, says Lufthansa Technik

Murdo Morrison

Completion centres are being kept busy by customers opting to refit rather than replace head-of-state and VIP jets because of delays to new widebody deliveries, including Boeing's still uncertificated flagship 777X.

That is the view of Lufthansa Technik's head of sales VIP and special aircraft services Wieland Timm, who describes the market for airliner-derived business jet interior projects as "very active".

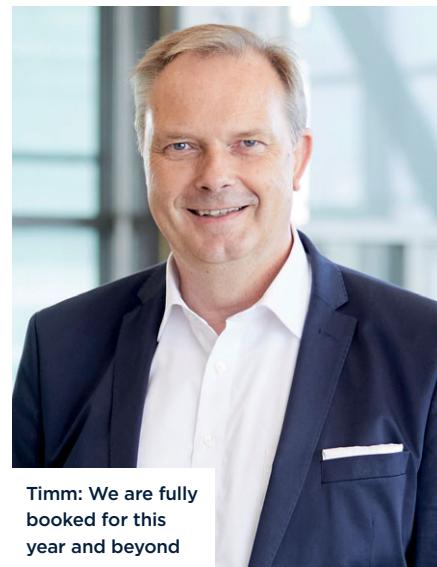
"Because so many new aircraft deliveries are late, customers are booking in extensive refurbishment work on their existing jets, such as antennas and other cabin systems," he says. "We are fully booked for this year and beyond, as is our competition."

The German maintenance repair and overhaul house is one of a handful of companies in the world able to carry out full-scale cabin completions and refits on widebody business jets and dominates the market with Swiss rivals Jet Aviation and AMAC.

At EBACE, the company is launching its latest CelestialSTAR cabin concept for the 777-9 after a "partial unveil" at November's Dubai air show, and previous teases. It is targeting the Middle East head-of-state market, the region in which Timm expects the strongest demand for head-of-state variants of the type, which Boeing is aiming to have in airline service by 2025.

Previously unseen elements of the concept include a master bedroom with curved dividers that form a "cocoon" for privacy or can be removed to "create a feeling of spaciousness". A trend in modern ultra-VIP aircraft is to remove much of the furniture and monitors of earlier designs to create a more minimalist, airy feel, he says.

Lufthansa Technik will also deliver this summer its third and final A350



Timm: We are fully booked for this year and beyond



The company is revealing more details on its CelestialSTAR 777-9 concept, including this master bedroom design

configured for government transport duties at its Hamburg facility to the German air force. Although the more functional configuration of Berlin's head-of-state aircraft is likely to differ substantially from the more lavish designs favoured by Gulf nations, Timm says Lufthansa Technik's experience of the type will help its prospects in that market, where it has "three or four current campaigns".

At EBACE, Lufthansa Technik is displaying the latest version of its aircraft patient transport unit, which Timm says incorporates several new features that allow patients to be flown in "hospital intensive care" conditions.

Lufthansa Technik is also looking for a partner to establish an interiors facility for VIP in the Middle East, which it hopes to open by the end of the decade. It already has a small MRO unit in the Dubai South development around that emirate's second airport, Al Maktoum International.

At EBACE, Lufthansa Technik

is also outlining progress on the latest version of its NICE (network integrated cabin equipment) cabin management system for business jets, which it says could be launched as soon as next year. The company says the cloud-based technology, which is adapted from its Aereana platform for commercial airliners, will "revolutionise" cabin management for business jet travellers because software and new features can be updated, or troubleshooting carried out, in real time. Aereana is currently being tested on an Airbus A320, operated by Lufthansa leisure subsidiary Discover Airlines.

Another new product being showcased in Geneva is its Omni-Fi speakers. Lufthansa Technik does not make the speakers but holds the exclusive licence for the aviation sector. Omni-Fi's chief selling point, says the company, is its ultra-slim design, which allows cabin designers the freedom to hide the speakers behind sidewall panels or within the seat "without compromising on

sound quality". Lufthansa Technik is demonstrating the speakers on its stand.

The company is also at EBACE demonstrating a concept of a cabin management system based on NICE but "tailored" for the advanced air mobility market. It will offer manufacturers a "modular" package, with a common base but a choice of gaspers and buttons and says it will gather feedback at the show before launching a final product.

Lufthansa Technik is at the show after a period of uncertainty around the future of the broader business, one of the biggest MRO organisations in the industry. Earlier this year, the company outlined plans to invest €1.2 billion (\$1.31 billion) to support its Ambition 2030 growth plan, after parent Lufthansa dropped plans to divest a partial stake in its MRO unit. The strategy calls for additional infrastructure, possible acquisitions, and more emphasis on military conversions as Germany increases its defence budget. ▶

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Operators are preparing for a surge in demand around Euro 2024 and the Paris Olympics

Warming up for a summer of sport

Kate Sarsfield

Europe's business aircraft operators are gearing up for a bonanza of summer sporting events with key tournaments - the UEFA European championships or Euro 2024, being held in Germany from 14 June to 14 July, and the Paris Olympic Games (26 July - 11 August) - set to fuel demand for charter and management services during what is already one of the sector's busiest periods.

"Big sporting events are always a trigger for an increase in flight activity," says Oliver Smith, head of sales at UK charter and management company SaxonAir. He describes Euro 2024 and the Olympics as "particularly exciting opportunities as they are on our doorstep this year".

SaxonAir expects demand for charter flights to these major events to come from its regular clientele and corporate customers who use these events to "entertain clients and forge new industry connections".

"We expect to get a few groups who only use charter for a special occasion and share the price between the passengers," says Smith.

As with any major event, preparation and early booking is key, he insists. While the Norwich-headquartered operator boasts a fleet of five business jets and nine helicopters, the above average seasonal demand for the fleet could result in limited or restricted aircraft availability. Customers could also be forced to fly to airports further afield, use other means of transport or pay for much bigger aircraft than they require. "This will cause frustrations all around," says Smith.

For TAG Aviation Europe, one of the continent's largest charter and management companies with a fleet of around 30 business jets, the summer season typically consists of "two hits in two stages". The first is the booking spree in May, it says, where the clients define their plans. The "trip organisation and flight watching element" fall closer to the date of departure.

"Given the hectic schedule this summer, we will have to work hard to set expectations for our



Germany will host this year's Euros

clients... by providing clear, concise information on aircraft accessibility, parking, slots and all other facets of aviation that may cause hiccups along the way," says chief commercial officer, Karl Mills.

On the charter side TAG had received a number enquiries by early May, but few bookings. In contrast, owners of its managed aircraft have already pre-planned their travel to Euro 2024 based on their country's progression throughout the events. "Planning for the semi-finals and final will be chaotic, so advice to all clients is to pre-plan as much as possible," says Mills.

Austrian charter operator GlobeAir says major sporting events always drive an uptick in demand, but Euro 2024 is expected to generate a "more significant response" than other events, particularly after the group stages.

GlobeAir - the world's largest operator of Cessna Citation Mustangs with a fleet of 20 - is placing a heavy emphasis on marketing its availability well ahead of the tournament.

The company is offering exclusive fixed-rates on flights on specific routes during the Euros to encourage early booking and add "convenience and predictability" to

customer travel plans.

"Despite our efforts to encourage customers and brokers to book early to ensure availability and optimal service, historical trends suggest that most reservations are made during the events," says founder and chief executive Bernhard Fragner.

He describes the Mustang as "perfectly suited" to the unique demands of these sporting events. "It's an ideal choice for groups of up to four passengers and designed for short-haul flights across Europe."

It's a similar picture at the top end of the charter market. Swiss VIP operator Comlux says it is "actively preparing" for an influx in demand for its business jet fleet spanning the super-light Pilatus PC-24 to the Boeing BBJ 787-8 widebody airliner. "We are providing a tailored service onboard our aircraft to meet the needs of a host of groups including corporate sponsors, sports teams, spectators and fans," says Comlux sales director Mouad Bakrim.

Comlux has ample experience servicing a high-end client base during major sporting events and those heading to Euro 2024 and the Olympics this summer will be no exception.

"Historical data shows that bookings increase as the event

date draws near, with our clients preferring the comfort, flexibility and luxury that our fleet offers," suggests Bakrim. "Not only do bookings increase, but customers often want better service and a tailored experience for the events they attend. This encourages us to continuously adapt and improve our products to meet the needs and preferences of people traveling to such global sporting events."

Comlux says it has a VIP aircraft to accommodate any group - from sports teams making use of the 237-seat BBJ 787 and fans travelling on the 11-seat long-range Bombardier Global 6500 or 19-seat Airbus ACJ319 narrowbody. "Their choice of aircraft often is determined by the length of travel," says Bakrim. With long trips, it's likely that a shower and bedroom will be requested so passengers can stretch out," says Bakrim.

On the ground, airports and fixed base operators (FBOs) are also busily preparing for an influx of traffic around these key events. Global FBO provider ExecuJet says its facility at Paris le Bourget is gearing up for a surge in VIP aircraft headed to the Olympics. "We are significantly increasing our staffing levels to accommodate the extra traffic," it says. ▀



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There are around 30 aircraft to see on the outside display. It is a chance to get up close and personal with some of the sector's leading products

Stars of the show



Cessna Citation Latitude

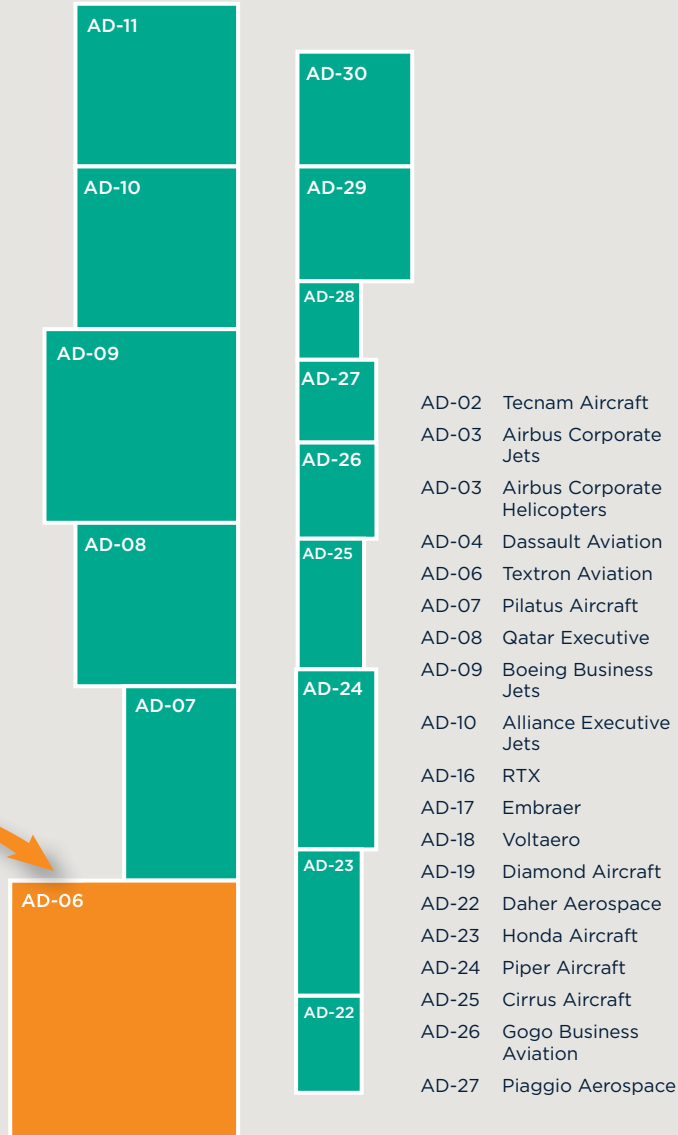
Textron Aviation's midsize flagship is becoming a market veteran, nine years after its certification. However, it remains a top seller in this competitive segment, with the company marking the 400th Latitude off the production line last year. Announced in 2011 as a clean sheet design, although retaining elements of earlier models, including the Sovereign's wing, the Pratt & Whitney Canada PW306D-powered aircraft can carry nine passengers and has a range of 2,700nm (5,000km).



VoltAero Cassio S

The French start-up's environmentally friendly single prop four-seater Cassio 330 is making its EBACE debut in the exhibition hall, albeit as a mock-up. On the static, VoltAero is displaying its Cassio S testbed aircraft that the company has been using to validate its hybrid electric architecture. The modified Cessna 337 Skymaster, which has completed around 170 flying hours over 230 sorties, flew to Geneva from VoltAero's facility in southwest France on a blend of biofuel made from wine. VoltAero plans to fly the Cassio 330 by the end of this year, with service entry slated for late 2025.

STATIC DISPLAY OF AIRCRAFT AT GENEVA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



Main entrance and shuttle bus to Palexpo



Note: Details correct at the time of going to press



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