

2007 Paris AIR SHOW preview

Business aircraft OEMs gear up for Europe's second show

by Charles Alcock

This year poses a stiff test for the debate about whether business aircraft manufacturers need to be at both the annual European Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (EBACE) and the biennial Paris Air Show. The gates will open at the French capital's Le Bourget Airport on June 18, just 16 working days after EBACE closed in Geneva on May 24.

The rapid rise of EBACE has undoubtedly posed a threat to the business aviation content of the Paris show. However, the Paris 2007 exhibitor list suggests that the still booming European market for business and private aircraft merits the considerable extra effort and expense associated with the Le Bourget show.

Unsurprisingly given its home field advantage, Dassault Aviation will lead the pack of business jets in Paris. Its newly certified Falcon 7X trijet will star in the Le Bourget flying display on the show's opening day, and it will be accompanied on the static line by its Falcon 2000EX and 900EX siblings.

Cessna is returning to the Paris Air Show after a seven-year absence that began when the EBACE show was launched in 2001. The company is returning with a vengeance, dwarfing its rivals with an array of Citations that will include the Citation Mustang, the CJ1+, the CJ2+, the CJ3, the Encore+, the XLS, the Sovereign and the X, as well as a Grand Caravan and a Turbo Stationair, and the mock-up of its new Large Cabin Concept proposal.

Hawker Beechcraft will have a high

profile at Paris, on the heels of the company's acquisition by Onex Partners and GS Capital Partners. It will display its Hawker 4000, 450XP, 400XP and King Air 350ER.

Gulfstream will be bringing examples of its G150, G200, G450 and G550 to Le Bourget. The U.S. firm's strong presence is markedly different from its approach to the Farnborough Air Show, where it focuses only on government and special missions applications of its aircraft.

Bombardier has committed to displaying its new Challenger 605 and Learjet 60XR models (the latter making a Paris show debut). The OEM might also opt to bring a Global Express XRS.

The very light jets are conspicuous by their absence from the Paris 2007 roster. However, would-be supersonic business jet builder Aerion will be at Le Bourget touting its ambitious program. Grob will be one of the few business aircraft manufacturers to forgo the Paris show and exhibit only at EBACE.

The corporate/utility turboprop sector will be represented in Paris through the presence of EADS Socata with its TBM 700 and TBM 850 singles, as well as Pilatus and its PC-12 and Piaggio Aero with its Avanti II.

Civil helicopters will be in plentiful supply at Le Bourget, thanks largely to Eurocopter, which is showing off just about its entire current product line. Bell Helicopter, AgustaWestland and Sikorsky will also be at the show in force.

Newly elected French President Nicolas Sarkozy will open the sold-out event, one that lays a fair claim to being the world's largest airshow, with some 2,000 exhibitors from 45 countries. The expanded covered exhibit space now covers nearly 1.4 million sq ft.

The list of planned aircraft for this year's Paris show is high on volume but somewhat short of novelty—with the notable exception of the new Neuron unmanned combat air vehicle provided by



Organizers expect 220 aircraft on the static display at Le Bourget, down slightly from the 238 in 2005.

Dassault and its partners. The new Airbus A380 super-large airliner is back two years after it caused a sensation at the 2005 event and four months ahead of its first delivery to launch customer Singapore Airlines.

Boeing is not in a position to fete its next big idea, the 787 Dreamliner, because the Paris Air Show takes place three weeks before the airplane's July 8 planned first flight. However, the U.S. airframer surely goes into the Paris show in better spirits than its European rival, bolstered by impressive early sales for the 787 and the knowledge that Airbus is still struggling to restore credibility that has been battered by serious program delays and a flurry of top management changes. Nonetheless, Boeing Commercial Airplanes has opted not to bring a single example of its existing airliners to the Paris show.

The regional airliner sector at the Paris show will be dominated by Embraer with its E-Jet series, led by the E190, which will be on display alongside the company's Legacy 600 business jet. Bombardier will be seeking market support for its new CRJ1000 program, while at the same time looking to generate longer-term interest in the proposed C-Series narrowbody. It will also display a Q400 twin-turboprop regional airliner.

Avions de Transport Regional will arrive in Paris on a continuing wave of strong sales for its twin turboprop ATR 42 and ATR 72. The Franco-Italian group might also have news of a possible avionics upgrade and new training provision.

Paris is very much the global airshow. After French companies, the U.S. aero-

space and defense industry is the next biggest block of exhibitors, followed by the UK, Germany, Italy, Israel and Russia. First-time exhibiting nations include Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.

One new feature of this year's show is the Business & Technology Forum, essentially an opportunity for prospective small- and medium-sized suppliers and partners to meet the right people at OEMs further up the aerospace food chain. The aim is to set up some 5,000 face-to-face meetings involving 2,000 people from 500 different companies. □

All the Paris news from AIN: In Print, On Air and Online

All the latest news from the 2007 Paris Air Show will be available from **AIN**, with the largest editorial team on the international airshow circuit. More than 35 journalists, photographers and designers will be at Le Bourget producing four daily on-site publications (June 18 to 21), as well as daily **AINtv** broadcasts at www.aintv.com (June 17 to 22) and fresh online content at www.ainonline.com.

Exhibitors with news for the Paris show should contact editorial director Charles Alcock as soon as possible. News embargos will be strictly honored. Information and photos can be sent to CALcockAIN@aol.com or call +44 1252 727758.

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