



A full contingent of midsize Hawkers, including this Hawker 850XP and the super-midsize Model 4000 just a stone's throw away, are on static display here at MEBA 2008. In all, more than 60 aircraft are on static at this year's show.

## Largest operator of Airbus bizliners spreads its wings

by Charles Alcock

Comlux Aviation is set to further boost its standing as the world's largest operator of Airbus corporate and VIP aircraft with the announcement of another new order here at the MEBA show today. At the same time, the Swiss-based group has been expanding its business aviation services portfolio by increasing its cabin completions capability.

Last month, Comlux acquired the Indianapolis Jet Center (IndyJet), which will now trade under the name Comlux Completions USA. On Friday, it announced the appointment of David Edinger as CEO of this new U.S. subsidiary. Edinger has 31 years of experience in private aircraft completions, having most recently served as head of program managers for Airbus VIP cabin completions after positions with Dee Howard, Reese Design and Associated Air Center.

Comlux, in partnership with Bahrain-based MAZ Aviation, is a 40-percent shareholder in the Airbus Corporate Jet Centre completions house in Toulouse, France. According to Comlux president and CEO Richard Gaona, the company now is looking to extend its alliance with MAZ Aviation to include an operational base in the Middle East. He indicated to **MEBA Convention News** that this could be in place during 2009.

The addition of IndyJet adds significant Bombardier Business Aircraft capability to Comlux's established expertise with Airbus aircraft. The U.S. firm holds several supplementary type certificates covering modifications for executive versions of the CRJ200 regional airliner and the large-cabin Challenger 850.

Comlux is offering CRJ200s with completely reworked VIP cabins and additional fuel tanks to boost range. The Indianapolis facility recently delivered such an aircraft to a customer in China and is preparing to increase its capacity to be able to deliver six completed aircraft each year (up from the current total of four).

Meanwhile, the newly established Comlux Creatives division is helping clients with aircraft interior design and the management of completions projects. Comlux is currently handling 10 separate completions, having brought two new customers to the Airbus Corporate Jet Centre over the past three months.



operated for charter under management contracts, but the company also flies another Global XRS for the exclusive use of its private owners. In the next few months, it expects to add another ACJ under a private management contract, as well as a second A318 Elite. Next year should also see the arrival of a second 605 and a Global Express (with another of these also on order).

Gaona said that the Middle East is now generating the world's strongest levels of growth in aircraft charter and management services. He said that while the

The group's Fly Comlux charter and management arm now has a new general manager in the shape of Stephen Laven,

who formerly ran the Ford Motor Company's European flight department and was previously head of Harrods Aviation's flight operations. Fly Comlux consists of Zurich-based Comlux AG, private aircraft division Comlux Exclusive and the company's new charter operation in Malta. The group also has a new air operator's certificate and base in Kazakhstan.

In addition to the Airbus Corporate Jetliner on display here at the MEBA show (see page 20), the existing Comlux fleet consists of an A318 Elite, two Bombardier Global XRSs, a Global 5000, a Challenger 605 and a pair of Challenger 850s. All of these are

global financial crisis has resulted in some softening in demand for smaller business jets, larger, longer range aircraft are still doing well. "We are in this market for the long-term," he commented. "We are not ignoring the crisis but we are not overly pessimistic and this is why we are involved in more than just charter services."

From Comlux's recent experience with clients, despite the credit crunch, money is still available to fund aircraft transactions. "Finance can be very easy or very difficult, depending on whether the organization concerned is solid or not," explained Gaona. "The banks are definitely taking less risk now and the country of registration for the aircraft can be a key point in the process." □

## Air ambulance division takes off at Prestige Jet

by Günter Endres

Abu Dhabi-based Prestige Jet (Chalet No. 23) is expanding its air ambulance business to cater for a strong surge in demand for its medical evacuation and repatriation services. Yesterday, the company announced the formation of a new subsidiary, Prestige Flight Ambulance (PFA), which will make a dedicated Bombardier Challenger 604 and Learjet 55 available around the clock to carry patients to and from the United Arab Emirates.

The two aircraft will be fully equipped with an onboard intensive care unit and highly qualified medical staff. Patients can be accompanied by their own physicians and an all-female crew can be provided when needed. Prestige Jet expects a 60-percent growth in operations by adding these two aircraft.

Last week, Qatar's Civil Aviation Authority granted an air operators certificate to Prestige Jet. This will allow it to establish a charter base in the country (see page 36).

"Our medical evacuation services have been recognized as the foremost in the industry in the region," said Prestige Jet chairman HE Gaith Ben Hamil Al-Gaith. "We have recently won the UAE Ministry of Health tender because we provide a service of the highest standards, to ensure the comfort and safety of patients seeking or requiring treatment elsewhere in the world." Managing director Farris Deeb added that this latest development follows high demand for air ambulance services from the private sector, as well as from private hospitals, government and the military. "Since the beginning of the year we have been tasked with more than 45 medical evacuation missions that included critical cases from the health ministry, local health authorities and private hospitals, with a 100-percent success rate," he said. □

### NEWS NOTE

**Gore Design Completions (Stand No. 900)** will next summer begin the full refurbishment and reconfiguration of the interior of an Airbus A340-200 for a Middle Eastern client of MAZ Aviation (Chalet No. 19). The deal was announced yesterday by MAZ chairman Mohammed Al-Zeer, along with Jerry and Kathy Gore of the U.S.-based completion specialist.

The project, which represents the third A340 signed this year by Gore Design of San Antonio, Texas, includes pulling out the current interior and reconfiguring more than 80 percent of the existing layout on the aircraft. All design and engineering work will be completed in house by Gore's team of designers and engineers. Jerry Gore has already completed initial design of the aircraft and both he and Kathy will work closely with the team throughout this project, which should take slightly more than a year to complete. ■