



Interior completions just keep coming

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One area of the industry may have enjoyed such a backlog in the good times that the bad times appear to be slow in arriving. Judging by the level of activity in the cabin completion market – especially for large cabins – one could be forgiven for thinking that the recession forgot to come knocking. Jo Murray reports.

"Interest in customised completions of large aircraft to the highest level of quality continues to be high," says Walter Heerdt, Senior Vice President Marketing & Sales of Lufthansa Technik. Lufthansa Technik is not expecting any significant decline in the demand for completions of large private and government jets.

Heerdt comments that the Hamburg-based completion operation continues to enjoy good utilisation and has only a few remaining layover slots to offer over the next four years. This facility is scheduled to equip and deliver two A330 aircraft and two A340s between now and 2011. Although the delivery dates have not yet been confirmed, another two preliminary contracts have been signed for the Boeing 787 and two for the Boeing 747-8. According to Heerdt, the company has not yet had any large VIP aircraft completions cancelled, and is in discussions with additional customers.

"Lufthansa Technik is well prepared for this sustained high demand in the large VIP aircraft segment," says Heerdt.

"Our operation in Hamburg is well utilised through 2015, and between now and then we have only a few remaining completion slots to offer."

StandardAero and Associated Air Center have also been keen to express how much demand exists for interiors.

"The past year has been a very busy one indeed," says StandardAero President and CEO, Rob Mionis. He adds:

"Following last year's EBACE, we broke ground on a \$20 million expansion at our Winnipeg, Canada facility, an engine shop redesign at Los Angeles, a new PW600 test cell in Maryville, Tenn, and new cabinet fabrication and upholstery shops at Associated Air Center in Dallas, to name a few. These investments highlight our continued efforts to provide an extensive array of MRO products and services with customer service second to none."

StandardAero's subsidiary, Associated Air Center (AAC), has announced that it has signed a new contract for the completion of a green ACJ. The contract represents AAC's 16th ACJ completion since becoming an Airbus Authorised Completion and Service Center in 2003. The aircraft represents the second ACJ completion for the same Head-of-State client.

AAC has also completed the necessary modifications required for compliance to the Federal Aviation Administration's SFAR-88 Mandatory Airworthiness Requirements Directive (AD), on its ninth BBJ aircraft equipped with DeCrane-PATS auxiliary-fuel-tank systems.

Further from StandardAero is an agreement with TAG Aircraft Interiors Ltd (TAG-AI) to offer "Limited Edition" interior completions at its Springfield, IL, facility. Through this agreement, StandardAero is able to offer up to full interior completions in exclusive designs penned by the House of Versace. Versace Interior Design Atelier is responsible for content, design and style, while TAG-AI manages the logistical and technical aspects of the interior design contracts, and acts as the marketing and sales agent. Versace's move into VIP aircraft interiors is a logical extension of the house's expertise in home interior and fashion design.

Good news has also emanated from Gore Design Completions (GDC) which has delivered a B737-700 under budget to a Central Asian customer. The 737-700 green completion was also finished on schedule. This aircraft represents the second of three projects that GDC will perform for this customer. The first project, a green completion of a 767-300ER, was finished in 2004. In 2010, GDC will begin green completion work on a 777-200LR for this central Asian customer. All three are Head of State aircraft and include private executive quarters as well as minister and staff areas.

Further, the first A340 project for GDC has been delivered under budget to a Middle Eastern customer. The project included a partial reconfiguration and refurbishment of a commercial airliner and is considered a VVIP interior.

Design work for the project was completed by PIERREJEAN Design Studio and the interior was built and installed at



the GDC facilities in San Antonio, Texas. Upon completion of this A340, GDC expects to deliver its first green completion of an A340 in early fall 2009 and to begin work on a full reconfiguration and refurbishment around the same time.

In late August, GDC was awarded major contracts for the completion of two Airbus A340-500 aircraft. The first of these aircraft is due for delivery to GDC in late summer 2010 and the second aircraft will arrive in early 2011. These aircraft will be the fourth and fifth Airbus A340 signed by GDC since 2008.

Heading back towards Europe, Airbus Corporate Jet Centre is a subsidiary jointly owned by Airbus and Comlux. The centre's experienced team of engineers and craftsmen offers Airbus and Comlux's customers a full range of outfitting services and support for Airbus ACJ Family aircraft. In a modernised and extended facility located on Airbus's site in Toulouse, France, Airbus Corporate Jet Centre offers VIP cabin outfitting on the ACJ family, from cabin design and engineering to technical interior definition, production, installation and certification.

The outfitting of an A319 Corporate Jet with a high-end interior confirms the Airbus Corporate Jet Centre's know-how in cabin completions for the corporate and VVIP marketplace. This interior – installed on an aircraft for a Middle East customer – involves a wide range of innovative cabin solutions, including connectivity (satellite communications, Internet, LAN, and Wi-Fi), audio-visual systems (on-demand programming and new-generation in-flight entertainment), and specific options such as satellite television and a network of external cameras. Since its creation in July 2007 Airbus Corporate Jet Centre has completed three aircraft: two A320s and one A319 Corporate Jet, all for undisclosed customers. This last VVIP cabin was delivered in July. The completion centre has now booked a total of 10 contracts for cabin-outfitting from customers in Asia, Europe and the Middle East, and its backlog is full until 2011. Further, Airbus Corporate Jet Centre is launching new services for cabin upgrade and aircraft maintenance.

Comlux Completion USA is similarly making its mark. It has plans to expand its Indianapolis operations, a move that is expected to create 480 new jobs over the next five years. Comlux Completion (formerly Indianapolis Jet Center) operates two hangars at the Indianapolis International Airport. There, the company upgrades, refurbishes, completes and provides maintenance services for jets and other aircraft. The company plans to expand the existing hangars and construct an additional hangar to accommodate wide body aircraft.

Comlux Completion USA has also been designated a Bombardier AOG/ Line Maintenance Facility (AOG/ LMF) in Indianapolis, Indiana. The agreement authorizes Comlux Completion USA to perform work on Bombardier Learjet, Challenger and Global business aircraft.

Meanwhile, Jet Aviation Basel has completed its 100th Dassault Falcon cabin interior, which is also its first Dassault Falcon 7X at the Basel completions centre. What began in 1996 with the outfitting of a single Dassault Falcon aircraft has become a 14-year relationship between the French aircraft manufacturer and Jet Aviation. Today, Jet Aviation operates a designated Dassault Falcon completions centre in Basel, and outfits the Falcon 2000 and 900 series as well as the new 7X on behalf of the manufacturer.

Midcoast Aviation, an affiliate of the Jet Aviation Group of Companies, has also reached a milestone in completing its 25th Challenger 605 cabin interior. Midcoast Aviation began performing completions in the mid-1980s. In February 2009, Midcoast Aviation opened a green completions delivery centre as the latest in an ongoing series of facility and service improvements at its St Louis Downtown Airport operation. The company has in-house design and engineering departments, along with on-site cabinetry, upholstery, composite, avionics, sheet metal and paint shops.

328 Support Services based near Munich in Germany are in the middle of converting their next generation VIP conversion for Aviando Services, a South American company. Special interior features will include an all new HD in-flight entertainment system, electric window shades and Broadband connectivity in flight as well as De Crane soft leather seats with leg rests. 328 Support Services' engineering team will also fit long range fuel tanks to the aircraft, enabling a 2,000 nm range – for example, Dubai to Cairo. 328 Support will also carry out a series of heavy maintenance checks and other modifications prior to delivery.

Further good news has also come from 328 Support which has broken into the African market with a contract for two Dornier 328 Jet 10-seat VIP conversions. Work will start on the first of the two aircraft immediately with the second following later this year. The owner is also discussing the possibility of taking a third aircraft – msn 3151.



The newly converted 328 Jets will be based in Nigeria and 328 Support Services are discussing the long term support of these aircraft in country. The first aircraft is scheduled for delivery in the first quarter of 2010 with the second being completed a couple of months later..

Established in January 2006, 328 Support Services GmbH holds the type certificate for the Dornier 328 Jet and Turboprop aircraft. It provides worldwide support to a fleet in excess of 200 aircraft. At its Oberpfaffenhofen Airport, near Munich, Germany, base, its 120-strong workforce offer full maintenance and engineering work, customer support, spare parts and technical services together with aircraft modernisation, retrofit and customisation work. 328 Support is the only organisation certificated to undertake the fitting of long range fuel tanks which can be fitted as part of a conversion, or as a retrofit solution.

The company has selected EMTEQ as a partner for completion of several Dornier 328 aircraft for VIP operations. EMTEQ will provide a variety of products and services including the all digital SkyPro Cabin Management /In-flight Productivity and Entertainment System, LED interior and exterior lighting, integration engineering support and FAA certification services. All completion work will be

carried out at 328 Support Services' facilities in Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany. The first aircraft to feature the IFE /CMS package will be MSN 3209, destined for Aviando Services in early 2010.

Dave Jackson, Chief Executive, 328 Support Services, says: "This new partnership takes the Dornier 328 Jet to the next level of passenger comfort." EMTEQ will provide SkyPro™ – The Advanced Connectivity and Productivity Solution. This ground-breaking system is an all-digital system with a high-definition audio/video distribution network designed to maximize business-focused connectivity, lifestyle entertainment, and complete cabin environment control. Installation of EMTEQ's full range of LED interior lighting and cabin accessories include upwash /downwash lighting, reading/table lights, air gaspers, and AC power outlets. These high performance, low maintenance, lightweight products offer the desired interior aesthetics without complicated or time-intensive installation requirements. EMTEQ will also provide engineering design support and FAA certification approvals for the Dornier 328 Jet VIP configuration.

Finally, Flying Colours of Canada has been awarded three green Bombardier Challenger 850 completions from two different clients. The aircraft were recently re-located from Montreal, Quebec to Flying Colours main location in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. The aircraft will undergo installation of custom executive interiors and new exterior paint as directed by the client. The completions will be finished at Flying Colours Canadian Center and their US base in St Louis, MO, JetCorp Technical Services. All three aircraft are scheduled for delivery in 2010. "We have been actively expanding our green aircraft completion capabilities and are looking forward to procuring additional green aircraft in the future." stated, John Gillespie, President, Flying Colours.

The company received an STC for its CRJ ExecLiner Auxiliary Fuel System earlier this year. The auxiliary fuel system meets all Federal Aviation Regulations, including the requirements set out in SFAR 88. The CRJ ExecLiner programme was launched in 2006 and to date Flying Colours has completed three ExecLiner conversions with another four conversions in progress. This approval coincides with previous approvals by the FAA for their CRJ ExecLiner executive interior and Transport Canada STC's for both their executive interior and auxiliary fuel system. In addition to their ExecLiner conversion Flying Colours is also installing their executive interior and auxiliary fuel system in the CRJ Phoenix. The first CRJ Phoenix, SN: 7211 has been delivered to Ritz Pacific based in Macau, China. Flying Colours recently acquired JetCorp Technical Services, which offers the Renaissance series CRJ conversions. JetCorp will install Flying Colours' auxiliary fuel system in all of their future conversions.

So, with so much action on the cabin interiors front, it is easy to forget recession, falling or stagnant asset values and a dearth of cash. But then it is fair to say that these are long term projects, often undertaken for high net worths or VVIPs, and happily they are keeping our industry's completion hangars full.