

Orlando, Florida, hosted a record number of exhibitors and aircraft at the 1996 US National Business Aircraft Association convention which was held on 18-21 November, headlined by the launch by Bell Helicopter Textron and Boeing Helicopters of the world's first civil tilt-rotor aircraft. Ramon Lopez, Forbes Mutch, Alan Peaford and Graham Warwick report from the 1997 show, with photography by Mark Wagner.

Barents takes helm at IAI and Pritzker's Galaxy joint venture

FORMER LEARJET president Brian Barents took centre stage at NBAA, announcing the long-awaited formation of Galaxy Aerospace, the company which will take over manufacturing, marketing and support of Israel Aircraft Industries' (IAI) Astra and Galaxy business jets.

Barents is the president of Galaxy, which he describes as a "financially strong" company. He says that he will have an equity stake in US-based Galaxy, which is a joint venture between IAI and the Pritzker family, which owns Hyatt Hotels chain.

Galaxy will take over the operations of IAI's Astra Jet marketing arm, and will establish a completion and service centre at a US location yet to be decided. Barents says that site-selection negotiations will begin immediately after the NBAA show.



Barents: Galaxy is "financially strong"

Hyatt president Tom Pritzker says that the investment group spent more than a year studying the Galaxy business-jet programme, and says: "We think we have a winner." He says that independent analysts have confirmed that the "super mid-size" business-jet market, into which the \$14.6 million Galaxy has been pitched, is underserved. Pritzker declines to divulge the extent of the company's stake in Galaxy Aerospace.

Galaxy will be responsible for marketing the current Astra SPX and widebody Galaxy. The company plans to begin completing Astras in December 1997, and expects to receive the first green Galaxy in 1998. Barents says that Galaxy intends to have delivered 20 aircraft by the end of 1999. Plans call for delivery of 12-18 Astra SPXs and 18-24 Galaxys a year.

IAI says that assembly of four Galaxy flight-test aircraft has begun in Israel. The first flight is scheduled for the fourth quarter of 1997, leading to certification and delivery to the completion centre a year later.

Officials believe that the financial resources committed by the Pritzker group, coupled with the Israeli Government's recent recapitalisation of state-owned IAI, will make Galaxy a "formidable" competitor in the business-jet market. □



The Cessna Citation Excel is sold out until the third quarter of 2000

Cessna gives Citation Excel its first public outing

CESSNA SAYS THAT it will deliver the first Citation Excel widebody light business-jet in November 1997. Two are now being flown, and the aircraft had its public debut at the NBAA show. A third aircraft, the first production Excel, will be flown in July 1997.

Cessna says that the programme is ahead of schedule as the company seeks to create additional production capacity to meet demand for the aircraft. The Excel is sold out to the third quarter of 2000, and Cessna hopes to produce additional aircraft in 1999.

Certification of the Citation Bravo upgrade of the Citation II light business-jet is behind schedule, but is now only weeks away, according to the company. Deliveries will begin on schedule in January, Cessna says that it has an 18-month production backlog. □