

# Dallas hosts No 50

**Five decades of advocacy have secured the NBAA a pivotal role in business aviation**

GRAHAM WARWICK/WASHINGTON DC

**T**HE US NATIONAL Business Aviation Association (NBAA) begins its 50th anniversary year with a revamped name intended to reflect more accurately its role in enhancing the safety, efficiency and acceptance of business aviation. The NBAA also completes its first half-century of advocacy, with many major issues facing the industry apparently resolved satisfactorily, amid signs that the economic impact of general aviation, and business aviation in particular, is finally being recognised.

The NBAA has found itself busy in recent years as business aviation has been buffeted by regulations aimed principally at the airlines – reduced vertical-separation minima (RVSM), extended-range twin-engine operations (ETOPS) and user fees principal among them. Persuading regulators that rules conceived for airlines could severely, and unnecessarily, make an impact on business aviation has challenged the Washington DC-based organisation's ability to articulate the factors which make business aviation unique and useful.

As the NBAA enters its second half century, its efforts appear to have been largely successful. Business-aircraft sales are at their highest level in recent years, and manufacturers are beginning to recoup the massive investments they made in new products during the lean years. The RVSM is now a fact of life for operators of transatlantic aircraft, while a compromise has been agreed which will limit the impact of new European ETOPS rules. User fees have receded as a concern for at least the next five years, and possibly ten, with the US Government agreeing that general aviation should continue to pay its share of airspace-system costs through the existing fuel tax.

The latter is being taken as a sign that general aviation is finally being recognised as something different to commercial air-transport. If true, this will be a major breakthrough for the NBAA and other industry associations which have fought for years to convince regulators of the different operating and economic condi-



*New-aircraft launches (here the Raytheon Premier I in 1995) have added glitz to previous shows*

tions which govern general aviation.

The NBAA's lobbying efforts have been underwritten over the years by its increasingly successful annual convention, which has grown to be "...the largest purely civil-aviation exhibition in the world", it claims. This year's show will be held in Dallas, Texas, on 23-25 September and will kick off a year of 50th-anniversary celebrations which will culminate in the 51st annual convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, on 19-21 October, 1998.

The NBAA show has grown so large that only a handful of US venues can accommodate the exhibition. This year's show has attracted some 840 exhibitors to the Dallas Convention Center, and about 190 aircraft will be on display at nearby Dallas Love Field. Over 24,000 attendees are expected, says the NBAA.

There will be a strong emphasis on history at the 1997 show, looking back at the progress made over the 50 years since the NBAA was originally incorporated in September 1947, as the Corporation Aircraft Owners Association. Then it had 19 member companies – now it has



*Boeing's 737-700-based Business Jet is likely to have its debut at the 1998 show in Las Vegas*

nearly 4,700. Historical interests aside, the industry will gather at Dallas to sample what the NBAA show has become famous for – its recession-proof optimism about the future of business aviation.

## BUSY MANUFACTURERS

Over the year, the NBAA show has seen the launches of many new business aircraft, more in the lean years than the good, as manufacturers sought to stimulate the market with new products. No major launches are anticipated for this year – manufacturers are too busy building and developing their existing aircraft – but there will still be news from the exhibit hall and static park.

The "heavy-metal" end of the business-aircraft market has been transformed in recent months by the entry of first Boeing, then Airbus Industrie. The Boeing Business Jet, based on the Next Generation 737-700, and the Airbus Corporate Jet, based on the A319, represent a challenge to Bombardier and Gulfstream in the market for large-cabin, long-range business jets. Neither aircraft will be on display at the NBAA show, but announcements of new customers are expected.

Bombardier will display the fourth Global Express, the first to be outfitted with an interior. This will be an important event for the Canadian company, as Gulfstream will come to the 1997 show having already certificated and delivered its rival Gulfstream V long-range business jet. Certification of the Global Express is scheduled for May 1998, and Bombardier hopes that experiencing the aircraft's large cabin will persuade potential customers to wait.

Dassault does not have a direct rival to the ultra-long-range Global Express and GV, but is offering its extended-range Falcon 900EX as a cheaper alternative. Continuing talks on a ►