

FLEET EXPANSION GRAHAM WARWICK / WASHINGTON DC

# Avolar announces Gulfstream deal

United Airlines subsidiary also signs letters of intent with Bombardier and Raytheon to complete fleet by 2009

United Airlines' fractional ownership subsidiary Avolar has confirmed an order for 24 Gulfstream 200 super mid-size business jets, plus options for another 43. The deal, including a long-term maintenance agreement, is valued at more than \$2 billion.

The order follows on the heels of Avolar's announcement that it has signed letters of intent with Bombardier and Raytheon which, when confirmed, will complete the company's fleet plan, taking the

number of aircraft on order and option to 309, for delivery up to and including 2009 (*Flight International*, 18-31 December, 2001).

Avolar has signed commitments with Gulfstream for 102 aircraft, including seven GIV-SPs and five GVs on firm order, plus options for nine GIV-SPs and 14 GV-SPs. In addition, the company has orders and options for 122 Dassault Falcon 50EX, 900EX, 2000 and 2000EX business jets.

The agreement with Bombardier

covers 15 firm orders and 20 options for Learjet 45 super-light business jets, and 10 firm orders and 12 options for mid-size Learjet 60s, and is valued at \$632 million. The deal with Raytheon covers 15 firm orders and 10 options for Beechjet 400A light business jets, and is worth \$150 million.

Avolar, which has decided to locate its headquarters in Chicago, has begun selling shares and offering buyers short-term leases until deliveries of the aircraft on order

begin in April. Avolar president Stuart Oran is "confident several aircraft will have been sold" by year-end. The company plans to end 2002 with 20 aircraft, increasing to between 205 and 210 by the end of 2006.

The fractional operator has begun hiring flightcrews, and Oran expects Avolar to meet a "substantial portion" of its requirements by hiring pilots and flight attendants furloughed by United as a result of 11 September.

## FBOs

### Global network established for service firms

Universal Weather and Aviation has formed a worldwide network of independent ground service providers in a bid to improve and standardise the handling of business aircraft.

UVGlobal Network members will be required to meet consistent standards for available services, and will be regularly audited by Universal, which is a leading provider of flight-support services for business aviation.

UVGlobal, which already covers 35 countries, has two levels of membership. Network Centres are established fixed-base operators (FBOs) with dedicated facilities which provide services such as crew and passenger lounges, communications and ground transportation. Network Standard Members are located at airports where FBO facilities are not available. All members are required to speak English, and uniforms and presentation are standardised.

The network is open to any organisation, not just to those which have a service contract with Universal, the company says. A website providing access to the network is due to come on line this month.

## LIGHT AIRCRAFT

### Liberty completes design of its XL-2

Liberty Aerospace has finished the design of its XL-2 light aircraft, introducing a number of refinements to the all-composite two-seater, which is derived from the popular Europa kitplane. US certification is set for the third quarter, says the Montrose, Colorado-based company.

Useable fuel tank capacity has been increased to 105litres (28 USgal), with range exceeding 925km (500nm), while retaining

the original useful load of 270kg (600lb). The canopy now features a carbonfibre-reinforced roll-cage and a single-action, quick-release mechanism to open both gull-wing doors in an emergency.

A dedicated back-up power supply has been provided for the full-authority digital engine control (FADEC) system on the XL-2's Teledyne Continental IOF-240 engine.

The digital engine information

display, supplied by Vision Microsystems, will provide a "percent power" reading for the first time in a certificated light aircraft.

FADEC eliminates the engine's tendency to "kick back" during cranking, says Liberty, and is able to start the engine at speeds as low as 20RPM.

Testing of the Dowty-supplied two-blade, one-piece, carbonfibre propeller has exceeded expectations, the company says.



## HELICOPTER

### Bell UH-1H upgraded to Huey II

The first Bell UH-1H upgraded to Huey II configuration (picture shows test-flight version) for a US operator has begun flight testing at Helipro in Wappingers Falls, New York. The upgraded helicopter is the first of three for the New York state police. The modification replaces and upgrades drive-train and airframe components, and increases gross weight as well as eliminating UH-1H airworthiness problems.

## IN BRIEF

### EXPLORER DEPOSITS

Explorer Aircraft is taking deposits for its single-turboprop Explorer 500T, deliveries of which are planned to begin in 2004. Level 1 and 2 buyers can make a refundable initial deposit while Level 3 requires a non-refundable deposit but guarantees a delivery price.

### SWEDISH MEDEVAC

Sweden's Norrlandsflyg has purchased a fifth medically-configured Sikorsky S-76A from Keystone Helicopter for an air medical contract in Gothenburg. The refurbished aircraft will be able to carry two patients and up to four medical attendants.