

EXPANSION JUSTIN WASTNAGE / LONDON

PrivatAir mulls management move

Venture into European aircraft management could lead to the company competing with Jet Aviation and Tag Aviation

PrivatAir is set to expand into the European aircraft management market in a move that will bring it into direct competition in its home market with Swiss rivals Jet Aviation and Tag Aviation.

The Geneva-based company competes with Tag Aviation and Jet Aviation for aircraft management contracts in North America, but has restricted its business in Europe to executive aircraft charter with its owned fleet and a small network of fixed-base operations (FBO).

Greg Thomas, PrivatAir's chief operating officer, says the first prior-

ity is to appoint an aircraft management director, with the aim of securing the first aircraft contract early next year. The new business will be based in Switzerland, but is likely to include a PrivatAir FBO and office in London. The operator will also apply for a UK air operator's certificate to enable it to fly charters throughout the European Union, says Thomas.

"The European market will need more research than the USA, as tax regimes and regulatory concerns differ widely," says Thomas. PrivatAir's European aircraft management busi-

ness will target the Benelux countries, France and Germany as well as Switzerland and the UK. He says that talks with four UK aircraft owners are ongoing and PrivatAir estimates having around 10 aircraft on its books by the end of 2003.

The company recently added four new aircraft to its managed fleet in the USA, taking the total to around 50.

The decision to offer aircraft management in Europe was taken before Jet Aviation was put up for sale earlier this year, says Thomas. He adds that "along with the rest of

the world", PrivatAir considered acquiring its competitor, but rejected the idea as "the price expectation was too high", he says.

Meanwhile, PrivatAir's Boeing Business Jet all-business class service for Lufthansa from Düsseldorf to New York Newark is set to be extended due to "higher-than-expected" load factors, says Thomas. The six-times weekly service was launched in June. The operator is set to hammer out a new deal with the German flag carrier in November for the season starting in March 2003. A second route could be added.

IN BRIEF

WINGLET SETBACK

Aviation Partners is delaying approval of its Hawker 800SP blended winglet upgrade until next May. It says this is due to a failure to obtain engineering data from Raytheon Aircraft. Aviation Partners has clinched five orders for the winglet upgrade, and was planning to deliver the first ship-set next year. The kit, which costs \$350,000 installed, produces a 7% drag reduction "with a corresponding range increase", says the company. The 1.06m (3.5ft)-tall winglets also give better time to climb performance, and an 18kt (33km/h) cruise-speed benefit over the standard aircraft.

ITALIAN MUSTANGS

Florence-based Delta Aero-Taxi has ordered seven Cessna Citation Mustang entry-level business jets for a fractional-ownership programme. The company now operates a Citation X. First deliveries are planned for late 2006.

EJM ADDITIONS

Executive Jet Management (EJM) added eight aircraft to its charter fleet in the third quarter, bringing the total managed fleet to 100 aircraft. The company is focusing on the US West Coast where it has added 14 aircraft in the past year.



B-N has interest in the three-engined Trislander but will not restart production after 20 years without firm orders

PRODUCTION MAX KINGSLEY-JONES / LONDON

First Romaero Islander primed for delivery as B-N negotiates orders

B-N Group says it is finalising negotiations to place the initial batch of new-build Islanders being produced under contract by Romaero, as it prepares the first aircraft for delivery. UK company B-N, meanwhile, needs at least five aircraft orders to enable it to relaunch production of the larger Trislander variant.

B-N's contract with Romaero in July relaunched series production of the eight-seat Islander piston twin in Romania after a four-year hiatus, calling for the 24 aircraft to be delivered at a rate of one a month (*Flight International*, 30 July-5 August). The first aircraft was ferried last month to B-N's completion centre in Bembridge,

Isle of Wight, from Romaero's Bucharest plant.

According to B-N Group marketing director William Hynett, the first aircraft has been placed with an undisclosed civil customer, and will be delivered before year-end. "We're finalising negotiations to place the first six aircraft," he says, adding that completing the deals has been hampered by problems resurrecting production and achieving a stable output level. The new aircraft is priced at around \$500,000.

Although Hynett says that "principally, all of the first batch are for civil operations", there has been interest in the Defender 4000 surveillance/law enforcement model,

due to the increased focus on homeland security post-11 September. "We could take some of the new batch as this variant," he says.

Hynett says that B-N has interest "as far apart as Fiji and the USA" in the 18-seat, three-engined Trislander model, last built over 20 years ago. "We don't want to restart production without firm orders," he says.

Meanwhile, newly created Fly BN has been set up to focus on supporting the 1,250 Islanders in operation worldwide. This will involve assisting operators with product improvement programmes, such as the Harzell "scimitar-tip" three-bladed propeller retrofit to reduce aircraft noise.