

DEVELOPMENT

Grob to unveil six-seat turboprop for business use

Grob Aerospace is developing a six-seat single-engined turboprop, which is due to make its first flight in the fourth quarter.

The aircraft, tentatively dubbed the G160, will be targeted at the business aviation market and pitched against the in-production EADS Socata TBM700 and the Ibis Aerospace Ae270 Spirit, which is set for certification later this year.

The official launch of the G160 is planned to take place within the next few weeks and although details remain sketchy it is believed to be powered by a Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6-42. The G160 price could be less than €2 million (\$2.1 million).

FRACTIONAL OWNERSHIP JUSTIN WASTNAGE / SÃO PAULO

Jet Solutions fixed-wing scheme 'back on track'

Brazilian programme will begin operations with Cessna Citations and Embraer Legacys

Brazilian helicopter fractional ownership programme HeliSolutions is close to concluding finance deals with the first 18 owners in its Jet Solutions fixed-wing scheme. Brazil's first fixed-wing fractional programme will start operations with two Cessna Citation CJ2 and two Embraer Legacy jets, once joint ownership contracts are signed by the end of April.

Allan Paiotti, president of HeliSolutions, says: "Last year's economic situation and presidential elections in Brazil shifted the decision-making process of its launch customers by several months, but the programme is now back on track." The scheme, which includes

the financial involvement of Cessna, Embraer and TAM, was launched last year. The scheme's initial customers, including banks, telecoms companies and beverage conglomerates, have committed to one-quarter and one-fifth shares, and credit audits are under way. Several customers have chosen not to own the aircraft, instead paying an equivalent sum to gain access to flight hours, which has caused legal complications in the final agreement, says Paiotti.

The first four aircraft will be based at São Paulo's Congonhas domestic airport, but one of the CJ2s is likely to spend around half of its time at Rio de Janeiro's Santos

Dumont Airport. Jet Solutions will also offer Cessna Citation Encore and Excel aircraft in the future.

HeliSolutions is due to launch a second base in Rio de Janeiro before year-end. Paiotti estimates the market in Rio to be worth around 40% of that in São Paulo, which sees extensive use of corporate helicopter shuttles to combat traffic and personal security concerns.

Campo de Marte-based HeliSolutions will take delivery of a Bell 430 intermediate twin in May, which takes its mixed Bell/Eurocopter/Robinson fleet to 14. The Rio operation would start with one Robinson R44 shared by around 10 owners, plus a back-up machine.

PERSONAL JET

Diamond builds D-Jet prototype

Diamond Aircraft is to start construction of the first prototype of its D-Jet personal jet as it doubles the size of its composites facility. The Austrian manufacturer has completed the design phase of the aircraft and aims to certificate two versions of the five-seat, single-engined microjet by early 2006.

Construction of an 8,600m² (92,600ft²) composites facility will begin next month at Wiener Neustadt, outside Vienna. First flight of the D-Jet prototype is due by mid-2004, with deliveries starting by the second quarter of 2006. Diamond has reduced the engine thrust rating from 1,700lb (7.6kN) to 1,400lb and has narrowed the choice of turbofan suppliers to two, with a final decision due by mid-year.

The aircraft will cruise at a maximum altitude of 25,000ft (7,620m), which Diamond managing director Michael Feinig says will enable turboprop pilots to obtain type certification and insurance with less difficulty than for a high-altitude, fully pressurised jet. Diamond has decided to certificate the aircraft



The Diamond D-Jet will cruise at a maximum altitude of 25,000ft

with a maximum take-off weight of 1,999kg (4,400lb) in European Joint Aviation Authorities countries, with an extra 156kg on the US Federal Aviation Administration certificated model. This takes into account an average passenger weight of 105kg in the USA compared with 85kg in Europe, plus the extra fuel required.

Diamond says the dual certification is necessary to enable aircraft owners in Europe to avoid paying €80 (\$84) Eurocontrol en route navigational charges levied on aircraft over 2,000kg.

The aircraft has also undergone other changes since its launch in January. The wingspan has been increased from 10.3m to 11.8m to ensure an approach speed of 61kt (112km/h), which is also designed with the private flyer in mind, says Feinig. The maximum cruise speed of 315kt (585km/h) is unchanged. Diamond says its nine launch customers are to receive their contracts this week and around 300 potential customers will be given formal option contracts for the €830,000 D-Jet by the end of the month.

AVIONICS

Falcon 50 to get Max-Viz enhanced vision system

A Max-Viz enhanced vision system (EVS) is to be installed on a Dassault Falcon 50 operated by Seattle, Washington-based Mariner Air. The EVS-1000 uncooled infrared sensor will be mounted in the tail. Imagery will be presented on a head-down display to improve awareness of potential runway and terrain hazards at uncontrolled airports in Alaska.

The EVS-1000 was first certificated in March on a Bombardier Challenger 601-3A. The system is being installed in the Falcon by Boise, Idaho-based Western Aircraft, with certification expected later this year. The dual-sensor EVS-2000 has been selected by Cessna for its Citation X and Sovereign business jets, and the EVS-2500 will be certificated in a VIP Boeing 767-200 in 2004.