

NEWS IN BRIEF

JET COMPLETIONS

Jet Aviation's Basel completion centre has delivered its first Boeing Business Jet (BBJ) and a Boeing 767. The BBJ, which was also the first model to be outfitted in Europe, has a VIP interior with seating for up to 18 passengers. Features of the 767, which was transformed from an airliner into a VIP aircraft, include an integral airstair at the cabin door and a stairwell leading from the galley to the cargo hold.

PROP STOP

Hartzell Propeller has ended its production of two designs of its propeller, blades and hubs. This cessation will affect tens of thousands of older-design Beech, Cessna, Piper and Twin Commander aircraft. Production has ceased of other related parts for the series-1 and series-8 designs. A number of so-called X- and V-shank propellers suffered corrosion and were subjected to a restrictive Federal Aviation Authority airworthiness directive in 1997.

EMBRY CONVERTS

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) plans to replace its 54-strong fleet of Cessna 172R Skyhawks with the more powerful 172S Skyhawk SP models. The move follows engine performance problems which forced the organisation, based in Daytona Beach, to ground its 160hp (120kW) 172R Skyhawk aircraft less than a year ago.

SPECIAL PRODUCTION

Wyoming-based Aviat Aircraft has begun initial production of its 110 Special, which is a revised version of a 1932 Monocoupe racer. Deliveries of the first \$160,000 aircraft are scheduled to begin, following certification at the end of this year.

Pilatus expands fractional ownership network in USA

KATE SANSFIELD/LONDON

PILATUS PC-12 fractional ownership provider Alpha Flying is expanding its Plane Sense network to cover the south east and mid-west regions of the USA.

"Responding to demand from potential customers across the US, we have decided to set up operating bases in Atlanta, Georgia by December and in Detroit, Michigan, in the first quarter of next year," says Pat Reed, Alpha Flying vice president of sales and marketing.

The choice of bases has been a key consideration for the company, based in Nashua, New Jersey.

Reed adds: "We chose these locations due to their proximity to key commercial cities. Within a 400nm [740km] radius of these hubs, which represents the ideal range for single-engine PC-12 fractional customers, there is a tremendous amount of territory and a large target audience."

The Atlanta base, for example, will cover the Carolinas, Washington DC and Columbus. The base in Detroit overlaps Cleveland, Chicago and St Louis. Once these two hubs are operational, Plane Sense will cover around two-thirds of the USA.

Alpha Flying plans to offer the

programme throughout the USA and is now eyeing bases in and around California.

Reed says: "There is a demand for our programme on the west coast but setting one up provides logistical challenge. The leap from the mid-west to the west coast covers sparsely populated areas, where there are few, if any, customers, so it would be costly to operate."

Alpha Flying, the only single-engine aircraft fractional provider, operates six PC-12s for its 30-strong customer base. Initially, an extra two Pratt and Whitney Canada PT-6-powered aircraft will be placed at each of the new hubs, but there are plans to expand to 13 aircraft across its programme within a year.

The cost of a quarter share in a PC-12 is \$786,000, which entitles the owner to 175 flight hours a year. Monthly management fees and occupied flight hours are priced at \$6,000 and \$530, respectively.

Pilatus, based in Stans, Switzerland, has received its 200th order for the PC-12 turboprop. The aircraft, ordered by Novamerican Steel, will be used as a corporate shuttle. Production has risen from four to five a month. □



Growing demand for its PC-12 has driven Pilatus to increase production

GA enjoys sales growth

US GENERAL aviation manufacturers achieved a 42% increase in sales and more than a 13% growth in shipments for the first nine months of 1999. This is compared to the same period last year, according to figures from the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA).

A total of 1,692 aircraft were shipped in the first three quarters, to the end of September, up from 1,492 units in the same period last year. Total aircraft billings have already exceeded \$5 billion, reaching \$5.5 billion for the first nine months of 1999, compared with

\$3.9 billion in 1998. For the third quarter alone aircraft shipments rose by more than 13%.

"Looking at the first nine months of 1999, we see tremendous market activity throughout the industry. Record billings and increased shipments through the first three quarters has 1999 shaping up as another great year for general aviation," says GAMA.

Jet deliveries grew by more than 26% to 352 aircraft, piston-engined aircraft deliveries rose by 11% to 1,164, while turboprop shipments climbed to 176 units, a 9% year-on-year rise. □

ViperJet kit aircraft makes maiden flight

VIPER AIRCRAFT flew its ViperJet kitplane for the first time in late October.

The two-seat Turboméca Marbore 6-powered prototype flew a 15-minute test flight from its base at Pacso, Washington.

The composite ViperJet has dual controls and is targeted at the training and private flying markets. Performance projections for the aircraft include a maximum cruise speed of 740km (400kt), a maximum climb rate of around 25m/s (5,000 ft/min), and a maximum gross weight of 1590kg (3,500lb) □