**Bexair mulls fleet growth as travel needs change**

Bahrain-based operator considers more large-cabin aircraft to provide international flights

Bahrain Executive Air Services (Bexair) is seeking to expand its business jet fleet and operations within the Middle East to take advantage of growing demand for international travel from customers in the region.

The Manama-based business aviation services provider, the first non-royal corporate operator to be registered in Bahrain, is scheduled to take delivery of its first Cessna Citation Bravo light business jet next month. The aircraft will join the company's charter fleet which consists of a superlight Citation Excel and a large-cabin Bombardier Challenger 604.

"Most airports in the Middle East can be reached within 4h and our current charter fleet, including the Bravo when it arrives, serves us well. However, more of our customers are wanting to fly to Europe and we need more [large-cabin aircraft] to accommodate their needs," says Bexair marketing support manager Sakeer Sheik.

Bexair, which is backed by Saudi Arabia-based Arabian Support and Services, says it is evaluating the Embraer Legacy and is close to making a decision. "Many of our customers are financial corporations and multinationals whose employees fly in small groups. The Legacy has the ideal cabin size and range to serve both the European and Middle East markets," Sheik adds.

Bexair also provides aircraft management and passenger handling and says it is seeking to expand its operations to the United Arab Emirates, particularly Dubai, through the acquisition of existing companies or by establishing a new operation.

**FLIGHT TESTING**

Adam A500 heads for certification

Adam Aircraft has begun flight testing its second prototype A500 all-composite, centreline-thrust piston twin. A third production prototype is scheduled to fly in April, and US certification of the $895,000 aircraft is expected by July, says chief executive Rick Adam.

Englewood, Colorado-based Adam has completed flight testing of the first A500 prototype, which has accumulated 122h since its first flight in July last year. The aircraft will now be used for static testing, Adam says.

The second prototype will be used to test the environmental control system and pressurisation system, refine engine cooling and expand the centre of gravity envelope. Take-off and landing and range performance will be measured.

The first two A500s are "company conforming" aircraft, built on production tooling, says Adam. The third prototype will be fully conforming and will be used for FAR 23 certification testing by the US Federal Aviation Administration.

Adam has yet to fly the A500 with pressurisation, but plans to pressurise the second aircraft after the initial 50h of flight tests.

The fourth, non-flying, airframe will be used for static and pressurisation testing to destruction, beginning in May.

Adam has firm orders, options and dealer commitments for 100 aircraft, with the first customer delivery planned for July. The company plans to be producing three aircraft a month by year-end, and five a month by the end of 2004.

The A500 programme is financed through certification and into production by industrialist Adam and private investors. The company is seeking additional outside investment to fund development of the A700 twinjet derivative of the A500.

"We have completed preliminary design, and we need money to build the tooling," says Adam. He believes the 11-seat A700's performance will be competitive with that of Cessna's Citation Mustang entry-level jet, while offering a larger cabin. Maximum cruise speed is 340kt (630km/h) at 38,000ft and payload at maximum range is 330kg (725lb). Adam hopes to fly the A700 in early 2004.

The company says the A700 will have 80% parts commonality with the A500.