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# The Business Aviation Community Gathers in Geneva for EBACE

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## The Business Aviation Community Gathers in Geneva for EBACE

Amid the exotic flower displays, copious amounts of champagne and the general camaraderie that distinguishes EBACE from other industry events, competition is raging at both top and bottom ends of this fast growing sector.

Airbus and Boeing enjoyed a strong presence at Europe's premier business aviation event last week, highlighting offensives to increase market-share of their ACJ and BBJ products. Bombardier announced a new family of corporate shuttles based on the long range versions of its 50, 70 and 90-seat CRJ regional jets - dubbed the Challenger 850, 890 and 990 and Embraer heralded its entry in the light jet air taxi market, detailing two new products in the six to nine-seat category. In so doing, the Brazilian manufacturer becomes a challenging competitor - behind US offerings Eclipse, which has already amassed over 2,000 orders and options and Cessna's Mustang, which made its first flight last month and was on show in mock up form at EBACE. Another candidate is US Adam Aviation with its A500 and A700 VLJ.

Embraer identifies a market of 3,000 VLJs over the next decade, for which it is angling for a third. Regional aviation veteran Luis Carlos Alfonso, former chief engineer on the Embraer 145 and latterly senior vice president engineering and product development of the Embraer 170 and 190, is leading Embraer's foray into this market, a move which was approved by the Embraer Board just one month ago. Its VLJ should be available in mid-2008, followed by the Light Jet one year later.

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Embraer launched the Legacy, a derivative of the Embraer 135 in 2000, but now the company wants to prove it is serious about business aviation. Its new six-seat VLJ aircraft, which will feature PW600 series engines, will carry a \$2.75m price tag. The LJ will be \$6.65m, offering between eight and nine seats.

Alfonso is just one of a number of senior regional airline executives that have now switched their expertise to business aviation. Tom Appleton, who has spent most of his professional life with regional aircraft - at de Havilland and Bombardier - is now playing a major role in steering the Piaggio Avanti II program as Director of the Aircraft Division of Piaggio Aero Industries. James Hoblyn, formerly with Bombardier Regional Aircraft, is now vice president business aviation for the group. To his delight, he took an unexpected order for two Challenger 870s - list price \$25.2m - as details of the new family were breaking at EBACE. The commitment came from **Morris Shirazi**, head of US Aero Toy Store, who wants the aircraft to run VIP charters between Russia and Israel.

Eager to expand its presence in North America, Airbus is bolstering its team by recruiting from the business aviation fraternity. It named Don McLaughlin, former Sales Director of Gulfstream, Bombardier and Cessna Aircraft as Director North America and has appointed Jack Olcott, former

president of NBAA, to set up a Business Aviation Advisory Board for the ACJ. He will serve as a bridge between Airbus and the business community in the US and provide support and advice on regulation issues, safety and market trends. At the same time, the company is expanding its Miami facilities with a VIP center and ACJ cabin mockup. It will shortly name a second US interiors supplier. The manufacturer announced a repeat ACJ order from the Kharafi Group of Kuwait for the ACJ, which will be operated by UK company Twinjet, and its first sale to Indian customer, The UB Group of Bangalore, parent of Kingfisher Airlines, which will use the aircraft for corporate use.

Boeing Business Jets president Steven Grey highlighted that Boeing is close to achieving 100 orders for the BBJ (for a typical interior see left), declaring the market "quite wild at the moment." He said the company has 30 formal proposals out to prospective operators for the last remaining positions for 2006 aircraft. He also disclosed that Boeing was studying a BBJ variant of the smaller 4,300 nm range 737-600, targeting corporate customers who would typically go for the Gulfstream or Bombardier, but who would be interested in a bigger cabin. Initial market studies will focus on customers' flight departments, but crucially the price has to be right to appeal, says Grey, for which Boeing is working to a ballpark \$45m. It is also studying a BBJ variant of the stretched 737-900, which would appeal to the Middle East market. Hire price is said to be [pounds sterling]8,500 per hour

Meanwhile, in the midsize cabin, established players including Gulfstream and Raytheon Beechcraft keep on adapting their product lines with new, improved variants and enhanced avionics and in-flight connectivity.

Marking its fifth year at Geneva, this year's EBACE Show attracted an enlarged static display of 40 aircraft and 300 exhibitors, 20% up on the previous year. For many companies who were signing customer support and maintenance deals, such as Rolls-Royce, Rockwell Collins and Honeywell, it was a hard call determining whether their executives should be in Cincinnati where the US Regional Airline Association was gathering for its annual event, or Geneva. This year, many opted for Geneva, a reflection of strong market interest. Others had to try and combine both events, helped by the fact that EBACE this year had been extended by one day.

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