

Crisis? What crisis?



The bizjet business is still booming in the Middle East, as Mike Vines reports

The big question at the first three-day Middle East Business Aviation show in November was, 'would Middle Eastern business aircraft orders remain firm while those on other continents struggled?' The answer seems to be yes as orders announced topped \$1.5 billion, the majority being VVIP wide body heavy iron with owners oil-rich enough to weather any world financial crisis. Seventy five business aircraft and helicopters graced Dubai's Airport Expo ramp, which is startling considering how young this show is. It has already pushed itself into the number two world slot for aircraft displayed at a specialist business aviation show at its second attempt.

New in-region business aircraft charter operators included the Al Jaber Group of Abu Dhabi, a company which is to start its first charter operations with an Embraer Legacy 600 in February, to be closely followed by another 21 aircraft – a pair of Airbus A318 Elites, two Airbus ACJs, two Legacy 600s, five Lineage 1000s and eight Embraer 450/500.

The Middle East's first dedicated business aviation airport is to be at the ex-Al Bateen airbase. To be known as City Airport, Abu Dhabi, it has a 3,200 metre runway and is very close to the city. Operators already based include Prestige Jet and Falcon Aviation Services.

Prestige Jet's fleet expansion is rapid – two managed Lineage 1000s join this year – with

Right: Abu Dhabi's City Airport is the Middle East's first dedicated business aviation airport
Below: further down the flightline, Boeing BBJs and Airbus 318s rub shoulders

Above: bizjet bazaar - much heavy and expensive metal in the static park at MEBA
This photo: Piaggio Avanti, with its (roughly) airfoil section fuselage, and Boeing BBJ



four bases in the Middle East and an FBO at Madrid Torrejon. Falcon Aviation Services, better known for its helicopter operations, now operates a Gulfstream G450 (the first of three on order) and an Embraer Legacy 600. On order are four Phenom 300s, two Legacy 500s, and three Legacy 600s. The order will take FAS's helicopter and fixed wing fleet from 15 to 41 aircraft.



MAZ Aviation of Saudi Arabia intend to build a \$200 million maintenance and support operation in Riyadh. The Middle Eastern MRO market is expected to grow at 9% per year over the next five years. Completion is planned for 2011, in time to service the company's 14 VVIP aircraft under acquisition (none smaller than BBJ/ACJ sized) and six Airbus A350XWB Prestige aircraft expected from 2014. ■

This photo: the world's tallest building, the Burj Dubai, a symbol of petrodollar wealth

