

Traffic returning after tough times, says ExecuJet

A tough 18 months for business aviation in the Middle East is coming to an end, according to Mike Berry, vice-president of Luxaviation Group (chalet 598), which runs the ExecuJet FBO and MRO network.

"It's had an impact on aircraft movements through the region," Berry (pictured right) said. "But we're starting to see positive signs, with aircraft passing through and drop-ins for maintenance."

"We're expecting to see improvements in 2019, especially in the latter half of the year, as issues with aircraft grounded during the Saudi anti-corruption cleanout and the Qatari political embargo should get ironed out and resolved."

"As a result of the widespread economic upturn, we are also expecting to see boosts in tourist traffic across the region over the coming months."

"This is an area that used to attract a lot of activity, from Russia in particular, but has dipped significantly in recent years."

However, Berry expects the traffic to be mainly long-range, large-cabin aircraft rather than smaller light and mid-size jets. "Talking to the OEMs, all the replacement orders are for bigger aircraft. The Gulfstream 650 is very popular, as are Falcon 7Xs and Globals. It'll take a while yet for the smaller aircraft, such as Learjets and Hawk-ers to return."

Meanwhile, Berry said ExecuJet

is making progress with its new combined FBO and MRO facility to be located at Dubai South's Al Maktoum International Airport (DWC). The design of the facility has been agreed and it is projected to be complete in early 2020.

ExecuJet opened its first FBO at Dubai International (DXB) in 1999, and has been expanding ever since. Major maintenance is still based at DXB but will move to DWC when the new facility opens.

"We're looking forward to the benefits of both local efficiencies and costs by being able to provide a comprehensive service," said Berry. "Customers will have the whole operation on the ground in one location."

Backing up the new facility



is a push by ExecuJet to recruit local people, and train them. Nine engineers from its internship programme graduated in November 2018. "People talk about the shortage of pilots but there's also a shortage of engineers," said Berry. "It's also a challenge to retain engineers. After we've trained them to a high standard, commercial aviation poaches them."

Why Middle East is key for Bell's helicopter growth strategy

The Middle East is key to helicopter manufacturer, Bell's, (chalet P6) growth strategy, according to Sameer Rehman, managing director for the Middle East and Africa.

The company has both Bell 429 and Bell 505 helicopters on display and says it expects to make at least

one significant product delivery announcement about its range at the show.

It says the Bell 505 and Bell 429 have become staples for private and business transport around the world. Bell says the twin-engine Bell 429 is designed with the future in mind and has a cabin that can

be easily customised. It has found favour with search-and-rescue operations and VIPs, with more than 300 flying. Locally, it has examples of the 429 flying in the UAE, and in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

"With more than 330,000 hours of proven operations on the global

fleet, the Bell 429 multi-mission aircraft is being chosen by corporate customers, police forces and medical teams around the world. We expect it to be the flagship for us in the region," Rehman said.

Meanwhile, the Bell 505 Jet Ranger X light five-seater single-engine helicopter has now reached 10,000 hours on its global fleet. The design consists of proven dynamic components, advanced aerodynamic design, a dual-channel full-authority digital engine control (FADEC) Turbomeca Arrius 2R engine, and, what Bell calls, "best-in-class" value.

With more than 100 flying around the world, it is designed to be easier and safer to fly, thanks to superior standard equipment and a Garmin 1000H glass cockpit.

Rehman said the Bell 525 was also on target for certification by the end of 2019. "This is our latest and greatest product," he said. "It is also our first commercially certified all fly-by-wire helicopter and we are very excited. It builds on the experience we have gained with military fly-by-wire helicopter technology over many decades, especially with the V-22 Tiltrotor."



The Bell 505 on display