

# Jones to lead fractional Flexjet's foray into European operations

US-based fractional and management company Flexjet is bringing its business model to Europe and expects EU ops to commence in Q4 of this year. It is looking to provide point-to-point solutions for its existing North American client base as well as new international customers, and will be led in Europe by MD Raymond Jones. Offering both fractional and on demand charter, it will acquire an undisclosed company in Europe in order to make use of its AOC.

"We will serve the global marketplace with programmes and services that are astutely tailored to the needs of private jet travellers, while also offering our North American base of shared aircraft owners the ability to travel internationally without ever having to leave the Flexjet family," says chairman Kenn Ricci. "Ray Jones' all-encompassing knowledge of the international market will afford us a tremendous advantage as we establish a significant operation here in Europe."

Jones, former senior VP of sales at Bombardier, says: "I have long admired Kenn's vision for Flexjet's expansion and am delighted to have the opportunity to lead the company's international operations. Flexjet is making private jet travel



Flexjet CEO Michael Silvestro on board a Flexjet Global Express. The aircraft has an Art Deco interior inspired by London hotel Claridge's.

between North America and the international domain more accessible than ever, and is introducing an unprecedented level

of service quality into the market. I look forward to working with the superb team Kenn has assembled."

Although he is relishing the



Ray Jones was senior VP of sales at Bombardier and has been brought in by chairman Kenn Ricci for his international expertise.

challenge ahead, Jones admits that a steady and measured approach is the sensible one to take when entering Europe. "We have considered Europe and it has been an agenda item for some time, but the market is such that one has to be careful as you come into it. You have to make the right decisions, and grow slowly, and make sure that you are taking all the back bearings, particularly in a difficult period as it is at the moment.

"The business model is still emerging. We know that there are

some things that we would really like to address first. We have a lot of clients based in North America and we know that for a long period of time they have desired a service here the same as that in the US, so that the whole experience is a Flexjet experience. We looked first of all at what we have and at what is being asked of us by our installed base of clients, and that drives one of the pieces of the jigsaw. I think new business models are going to be necessary in order to capture the business going forward."

As well as ordering a fleet of eight Nextant 400XTis for European operations, Flexjet has doubled its firm Challenger 350 order to 40 aircraft as part of its Red Label offering, and many of these are likely to be flying in Europe. A Flexjet Legacy 500, Embraer's 1,000th business jet, was recently cleared to operate to London City. "All the products that we have we are pleased with, and we are moving into an operating platform in Europe," Jones explains. "The aircraft we will be bringing in first are EMEA in terms of range. The licence and the AOC will be here in Europe.

"In all of our aircraft, the interiors are very important for us. We try to set ourselves a little bit aside, a little bit artisan in what we do."

## Now is the right time to add a fourth Nextant XTi

Czech Time Air has added a fourth Nextant 400XTi to its fleet. "The 400XTi is an ideal aircraft for the European market," states CEO Martin Prazky. "It offers a great combination of cabin comfort, performance, range, and most importantly operating economics. As a result of the exceptionally low operating costs, we are able to guarantee that our fixed costs associated with aircraft ownership are covered with the proceeds from charter utilisation.

"The 400XTi has served us well in our business, and we look forward to

the continued growth of this fleet for years to come."

A provider of air charter services from Prague Ruzyně airport since 2001, Time Air took delivery of its first Nextant 400XT in 2012.

Prazky has previously praised Nextant's product support department and says he regularly receives positive feedback from his colleagues in the cockpit and the company's finance department. Time Air is a Nextant sales agent for several European countries including the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria.



The avionics upgrade will enable EC145 crews to continue operating in diverse weather conditions.

## Sécurité Civile to enhance SAR capability with EC145 fleet retrofit

The Sécurité Civile, an agency of the French Ministry of Interior that performs SAR and medevac across France, has opted to retrofit the avionics suites of its 35 EC145 rotorcraft. The contract has been awarded to Airbus Helicopters by the French Defence Procurement Agency.

As part of this retrofit, all aircraft will be equipped with an improved avionics suite, allowing them to retain their ability to perform missions safely in all weather conditions, while complying with the latest performance based navigation regulations.

"This retrofit programme ensures that our EC145s will remain capable of completing the most demanding operations with the highest levels of safety," says Sécurité Civile head of aviation Victor Devouge. "This fleet is now enjoying an availability rate of around 95 per cent which is absolutely essential in allowing us to perform our daily operations."

Airbus Helicopters executive VP of customer support and services Matthieu Louvot adds: "We are very proud of the trust that the Sécurité Civile has placed in our support and

services with this second contract in less than a year. It is a great honour for us to be confirmed as the industrial partner of choice by this EC145 operator to which we are also providing a comprehensive, nose-to-tail global service solution."

The retrofit of the 35 aircraft follows on from the global services solution contract for the Sécurité Civile and Gendarmerie Nationale's EC145 fleet awarded at the end of 2015. The aircraft will be retrofitted over a seven-year period by Airbus Helicopters personnel deployed at the Sécurité Civile base in Nîmes in order to minimise the impact on operational activity. The mechanical and electrical modifications necessary to integrate functions such as LPV/SBAS guidance, digital maps, and GPS installations have also been optimised, to reduce the length of the retrofit process.

Established in 1957, the helicopter division of the Sécurité Civile operates a fleet of 35 EC145 on call 24/7 throughout France. In 2015 it flew over 16,000 flight hours, rescuing 16,000 people.

## ABS Jets makes the most of Honeywell weather wisdom

Prague-based ABS Jets has been working closely with Honeywell on further enhancements to an in-flight weather awareness application known as Weather Information Service (WIS). The operator and its crews are collaborating on designing and validating new features for future releases of WIS.

The WIS application was first demonstrated at Brno, Czech Republic, in June last year on Honeywell's experimental Boeing 757 and later adjusted to become compatible with Airbus cockpits.

Using WIS on an EFB is said to improve the crew's strategic decision making, thereby increasing flight efficiency, safety and passenger comfort. This is achieved by a set of meteorological products complementing standard on-board weather radar observations. With WIS, the flight crew is able to graphically assess the latest weather observations and predictions, giving the pilots the option to adjust the flight plan in order to avoid areas of turbulence and thunderstorm clouds.

ABS Jets' CEO Vladimir Petak has been impressed by the results. "It is great for our flight crew to be able to have accurate notifications about weather patterns along the route; this is particularly good to deliver real time information directly to them," he states. "It is also good news for the passengers, ensuring a smoother and more comfortable flight. I look forward to rolling this out throughout our fleet of aircraft."

Adds ground ops director Jan Kralik: "We use the latest release of WIS on our iPad-based Class II EFBs. We are also actively involved in the evaluation of coming features and planned system improvements. Results are instantly reported back to the Honeywell team in order to be implemented in newer releases."

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