



GULFSTREAM STREAMS SEAMLESSLY INTO THE GULF

News / Business aviation



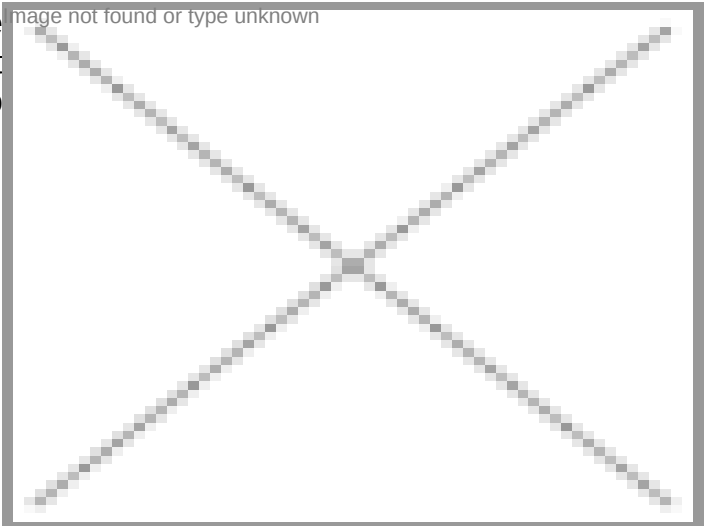
With a hefty order from Qatar Executive and strong interest in its new aircraft, Savannah-based Gulfstream is enjoying blue skies all the way in the Middle East. Could there be much better news for a business jet manufacturer in the Middle East? Qatar Executive, one of the largest operators in the region, has agreed to buy up to 30 Gulfstream aircraft, including its new babies.

The order is a combination of Gulfstream's new clean-sheet, wide-cabin aircraft, the G500 and G600, and its flagship G650ER.

Scott Neal, SVP worldwide sales and marketing explained: "Qatar was a significant opportunity for Gulfstream and one that we had worked on for quite a number of years. Our dialogue with the airline and with [CEO] Akbar Al Baker had been going on for three years, and fortunately

we came to an agreement last October when we announced the orders. So it's a great opportunity for us in the Middle East. We are glad to have our aircraft in operation with Qatar Airways."

The charter operator will take delivery of its first G650ER in the fourth quarter this year. The ultra-long-range aircraft can travel 7,500nm/13,890km at Mach 0.85 and 6,400nm/11,853km at Mach 0.90. It will join the 13 other G650s based in the Middle East, with more to come into the region,



promised Neal.

He continued: "We are really excited about the relationship with Qatar. They want the extended range of the G650, not necessarily to compete with their airline model, rather to fulfil the role that Qatar Executive is playing."

The new Gulfstream types are making good progress in their roads to certification and will prove popular, according to Neal. He said: "We've seen a trend in optimised speed and range and cabin size and technology. Customers really want a combination that delivers everything. That's where we think we've hit the sweet spot with the 500 and 600, which are really designed for those things. They are going to have the same speed capability as the G650."

Up front sees ground-breaking innovations in the new types, too, with active sidestick controls in the new Symmetry cockpit, which is a first for business aviation.

Neal continued: "The sidesticks offer a tremendous advantage over traditional controls, in that each pilot will know what the other is doing in terms of inputs at all times."

He explained that, like the PlaneView flight deck on current in-production models, it's not a static system. "They are built for growth and change." This means they can easily be upgraded to allow for new regulations, such as new air traffic control mandates coming into play over the next few years.

Both new aircraft have reasonably long legs – the G500 can fly 5,000nm/9,260km at Mach 0.85 or 3,800nm/7,038km at Mach 0.90. The G600 is capable of traveling 6,200nm/11,482km at Mach 0.85 or 4,800nm/8,890km at Mach 0.90. They're fast, too. The maximum operating speed for both aircraft is Mach 0.925, the same speed as Gulfstream's G650 and G650ER.

They are on target to enter service when predicted, Neal said. The first flight of the G500 took place on May 18 this year and Gulfstream projects it will receive type certification from the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) in 2017. The G600 flight-test programme is expected to begin approximately 12 to 18 months after the G500's, and entry-into-service is projected to be in 2019.

Although the newest members of the fleet garner the most headlines, the smaller end of the airframer's output is also well received and working hard for its money.

The super mid-sized G280, for example, recently set a city-pair speed record between Paris and Abu Dhabi, covering 2,908nm/5,386km in six hours and 16 minutes at an average speed of Mach 0.82. It, too, has been well received since its inception in 2012. There are now more than 60 G280s in service across 11 countries.

Passengers will also approve of the recent FAA supplemental type certificate (STC) granted to install the next-generation Satcom Direct router (SDR) on Gulfstream G550 and G450 aircraft. The addition of the smart router allows for more communication options in the cabin, including Satcom Direct's GlobalVT, which enables passengers to use their personal smartphones to call and text in flight, just as they would if they were on the ground. Outgoing calls show the passengers' personal phone numbers and incoming calls display the number of the person calling them. This voice and text functionality is secure and available at any altitude, virtually anywhere in the world.

The SDR also offers worldwide 3G connectivity on the ground with any service provider and supports mobile applications on board, including moving map and Flight Tracker, command and control of satellite links, and real-time connection status reporting.

Additionally, it interfaces with ViaSat's Ku-band and Honeywell's SwiftBroadband systems on-board connectivity systems, and is designed to work with future systems, including Ka-band (which offers much faster broadband speeds).

Installation of the SDR and accompanying software is standard on new G550 and G450 aircraft, with available as a retrofit for in-service G550s and G450s.

The new equipment weighs less than 10 pounds and can be installed inside the cabin or avionics bay. The airframer is pursuing similar STCs to add it to G650/G650ER, GV and GIV aircraft. Gulfstream's company-owned service centres have exclusive rights to perform the work. This brings up an interesting point about maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) services as part of a manufacturer's business strategy. Gulfstream has created its own cabin in-house, which uses both Apple and Android inputs to control the lights, window shades, entertainment and temperature, "and we continue to evolve that", said Neal. He explained: "Since it is designed in-house, we can make improvements on a continual basis. We built it, so we can support it. If there ever is an issue we are responsible and can respond very quickly to fix it."

Typically, this means if there are regulatory mandates, for example for avionics updates, Gulfstream offers that as a service through its product support network, (which also includes third-party authorised suppliers).

Neal continued: "One of the main focuses of our business is product support. It's one of the ways we can make sure all customers have a good experience with an aeroplane that is reliable and not down for maintenance all the time. We have brought more of the design in house so on the 500 and 600 we are building the wing."

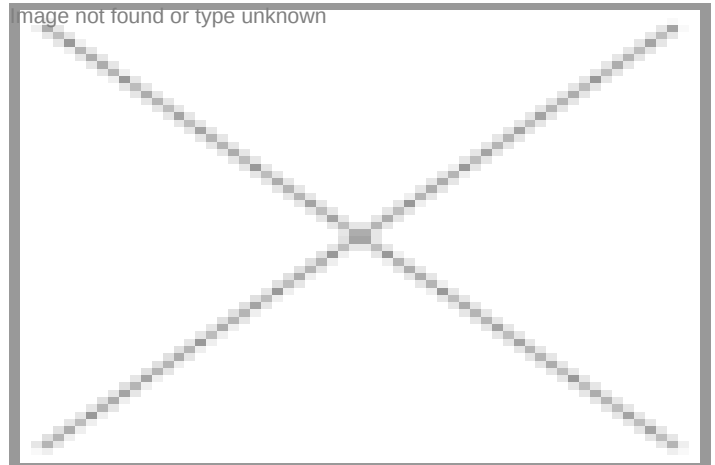
This means Gulfstream does not rely so much on third-party support to address its fleet issues. "We have taken more of a vertical approach to allow us to have more control over the reliability and support of our entire fleet." This goes down to completions – Gulfstream adds the interiors to all its own aircraft.

The airframer is in the middle of a big leadership change, with long-term chiefs Joe Lombardo and Larry Flynn both stepping down. However, that is no cause for concern, assures Neal. "It's a smooth leadership transition. If you look at the individuals involved they've all been with the company for a very long time. Mark Burns (who took over as president on July 1) has been with the company 33 years. I'm on the leadership team and I've been with the company 21 years. Most of us have been there a long time, so it's been a stable management team for many years and will continue to be so."

So how does he see prospects for the regional market in the Gulf?

"We continue to be very focused on the Middle East. The Qatar relationship will be a big benefit to Gulfstream and our owners and operators in the region. We are seeing strong activity in most countries," he concluded.

- See more at: <http://www.arabianaerospace.aero/gulfstream-streams-seamlessly-into-the-gulf.html#sthash.sGrKOb5x.dpuf>



30 AUGUST 2015

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