

JAPAN RAISES THE PROFILE OF ITS BUSINESS AVIATION SECTOR

News / Business aviation



Japanese exhibitors are kicking into high gear here at ABACE this week as they seek to promote Japan’s burgeoning business aviation sector.

The growing expo—now in its fifth year at Hawker Pacific Business Aviation Service Centre—features a lineup of aviation officials from the Japan Civil Aviation Bureau (JCAB) and the Japanese Business Aviation Association (JBAA), along with airport representatives from both Narita and Nagoya.

Speaking before the show, Makoto Tsunogae, secretary general of JBAA, told AIN he was looking forward to the event, which is once again expected to attract a broad audience of business aviation leaders from across the globe.

“ABACE shows market demands in the region and allows businesses [to meet people] from all over the world,” he said. “For Japan, it is an opportunity where we can [present our industry] to one of our biggest potential market regions.”

Universal Weather and Aviation and its ground support division Universal Aviation is one company that has established expertise in the Japanese market, and is on hand here at ABACE to showcase its extensive support and service offerings. Headquartered in Houston, Texas, the company handles logistics for business aircraft operators in 20 countries including Japan, Hong Kong, London and France. In recent months, Universal has added two more locations—Universal Aviation Thailand and Universal Aviation Philippines—expanding its network to seven countries in Asia.

“Universal is committed to the industry and is present every year at ABACE, promoting business aviation, not only in China, but also across Asia,” said Charlie Mularski, Universal Weather and Aviation regional vice president, Asia Pacific. “We get to see and spend quality time with our customers, vendors and colleagues, which is very valuable time and a worthwhile investment for us.”

Established in 2004, Universal’s unit in Japan—Universal Aviation Japan—provides supervisory services at all of the country’s airports in addition to its ground support facilities at Haneda, Narita, Osaka-Kansai and Sapporo. The team also offers services in English, Chinese, Korean and Spanish to ensure a seamless travel experience for business aircraft operators.

“Japan is a much easier and business-aviation-friendly operating environment today than in the past, with quality of service and support standards being among the best in the world,” said Hiroshi Higashiyama, representative director for Universal Aviation in Japan and managing director of the JBAA.

Thanks to the ongoing efforts by the JBAA and the advocacy of companies such as Universal, Higashiyama said officials are recognizing the value business aviation brings and are continually making changes to ease market access.

“We are seeing a change in regulations from the Japan Civil Aviation Authority, which should trigger more operators based in Japan,” added Mularski.

According to Higashiyama, there are approximately 40 Japan-registered business aircraft in the country, with the majority being Cessna Citations. It’s a figure that both Higashiyama and Mularski would like to see increase.

“We want to see more aircraft registered and based in Japan. Companies operating business jets are more efficient and productive than those that don’t,” said Mularski. “This is a proven fact in the U.S., and I’m sure it will be the same in Japan.”

Indeed, over the past decade, Japanese officials have been moving toward making the island nation more welcoming to business aircraft operators. The results have been slow but steady, with business aviation movements in Japan rising 2.2 percent annually from 2010 through 2014, and international business aviation movements increasing at an annual rate of 3.3 percent during the same period. While 2015 figures have not yet been officially announced, Higashiyama said numbers are expected to increase, albeit slightly.

“Japan is the third largest economic country; therefore, the business environment is always stable,” said Higashiyama. “In addition, while the world is looking at the Chinese market, Japan’s role is situated in between China and the rest of the world. Thinking about the environment, the volume of flights is dependent on the economic situation of countries other than Japan. The volume of flights for business purposes looks like it may increase slightly, but not dramatically.”

Recently, in addition to flights for business purposes, tourist operations have also expanded dramatically, mostly from neighboring countries, said Higashiyama. These flights have significantly boosted the volume of GA operations into Japan.

2020 Olympics

As Japan gears up for the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the Olympics/Paralympics in 2020, Higashiyama said the country is readying itself for an influx of business jets.

“The Authority is now investigating the volume and is in the process of setting a plan. We are working closely with the airport authority to devise a plan for activities that need to be completed in preparation for these events.”

With roughly two-thirds of business jets coming to Japan destined for Haneda and Narita Airports, Higashiyama recognizes that slots and parking space are notoriously tight. However, he is also confident that change is on the horizon.

“Just in the last few days, we learned that the airport authority that Haneda will be increasing the number of slots for GA aircraft. In the past, GA operators were limited to a total of eight slots during daytime hours [between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. local time, or 21:00-13:59 UTC]. This means that GA aircraft were limited to a total of four arrival and four departure slots. Effective April 2016, the number of available slots for GA will be increased to 16 total—eight arrival and eight departure slots,” he said.

Meanwhile, Tsunogae said Narita has become friendlier after recently opening a hangar dedicated to business jets. In 2012, the airport opened its Premier Gate business aviation terminal, the first in the Tokyo area.

Still, for those looking to avoid the general congestion of Tokyo, Nagoya Airport in Japan’s Aichi Prefecture is an excellent alternative. Little more than a two-hour flight from Shanghai, and less than three hours from Beijing, Nagoya is considered one of the few airports in Japan with a full-fledged business aviation terminal.

The airport, which is open from 07:00 until 22:00 local time, offers a dedicated customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ) facility, staffed on demand for international business arrivals, while ground handling is supplied by two FBOs—Nakanihon Air Service and Aero Asahi.

The business aviation terminal is centrally located, less than 90 meters (300 feet) from the ramp, and aircraft can taxi directly to their own parking spaces. Nagoya is also suited as a fueling stop for long-range business jets from the U.S. East Coast heading for mainland China.

Elsewhere in the country, Tsunogae said that both Chubu Centrair and Kansai are 24-hour international airports with no slot or parking restrictions. Chubu also offers CIQ facilities as well as a FBO and a maintenance facility. Higashiyama added that Kitakyushu airport can be requested for 24-hour CIQ clearance, but overtime needs to be arranged in advance, with charges applying. Finally, Shizuko—the nearest airport to Mount Fuji—and Kobe also accept business jets and have

FBOs on site.

Convention attendees who want to know more about flying into Japan are invited to visit Japanese team stands (located between P107 and P113) and Universal Aviation's stand (H317).

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