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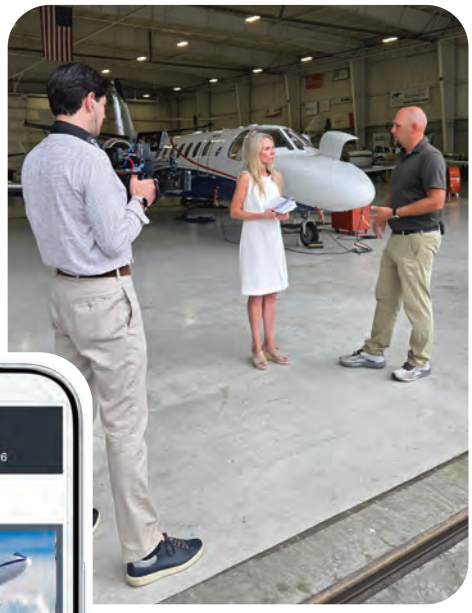
WELCOME TO THE 2026–2027 BJT BUYERS' GUIDE!

It has been an unusual year. Hundreds of aircraft sat stranded on Gulf ramps in the early months of 2026, waiting on closed airspace with no way to know when it would reopen. No amount of money or access could move them faster. If you were doing business in Dubai on February 28, you probably made at least one decision you had not planned on making. These events took place while we were planning this guide, and we asked the question: how can you better prepare for an uncertain world?



Stevens Aerospace, Greenville, South Carolina

Charles Alcock answers that question in his excellent piece "Ready for Anywhere" (*page 22*). He spoke with the security professionals who spent this year moving people out of difficult places. Their message is more encouraging than the headlines suggest. An unsettled world is not an unnavigable one if you have a plan.

Everything in these pages is built around a single purpose: helping you maximize your investment in private air travel, whether that investment is a card, a share, an aircraft, or simply a well-chosen charter on a Thursday afternoon.

You will also find this year's Readers' Choice Survey results (*page 34*), which tell us not only where you fly but how and why. To everyone who took the time: thank you. Your candor guides your fellow travelers, and your feedback is read very closely by the companies serving you.

We look forward to keeping you informed for the rest of the year. **BJT Waypoints** arrives every Tuesday with insight on charter, fractional shares, and ownership, plus new taxes and regulations, buying advice, onboard tips, event invitations, and industry news.

Make sure to watch our videos, which are regularly among the most-clicked things we publish. We take you into the cabins, onto the ramps, and into conversation with the people who know these aircraft, operations, and providers best.

Thank you, as always, for reading.

Jennifer English, Editorial Director

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What We're Watching in the Air

Thirteen jets, turboprops, and helicopters that caught our attention this year. There are plenty more.

By Julie Boatman

These days, everyone expects connectivity and comfort in the sky. Business aircraft manufacturers must differentiate themselves in singular ways in order to capture and hold your attention as a client. A select few do so by maximizing speed and range, while others focus on deep customization of the living spaces you'll inhabit in the air. Others use their nimbleness to take you places other kinds of lift cannot. Here are 13 aircraft worth watching, whether they're flying today or still on the way.

HERE & NOW

Bombardier Global 8000

If your goal is to get to the Monaco F1 Grand Prix as quickly as possible, a lead contender in that race is the newly launched Global 8000 from Bombardier. Setting a record in June 2026, speeding between the Canadian manufacturer's home base in Montreal and Nice, France, the Global 8000 made the trip in just over six hours, with its top speed of Mach 0.94 enabling the feat.

An 8,000-nm trip can be made in ultimate style, too, with Bombardier's recently announced alliance with the design house Elie Saab, an interior collaboration focused on elegance and abundance of natural light. With a cabin altitude of 2,691 feet while in cruise at 41,000 feet, the Global 8000 allows those on board—up to 17 passengers—to arrive refreshed. **Base price: $78 million; typically equipped, between $81 and $95 million.**

The enduring proof of a successful aircraft transaction is how you feel about it years later.

If you can look back and say it was a fantastic decision, that means you chose wisely—not just the aircraft, but the company that helped you acquire it.

So, go back to the future and ask yourself: How will the choice I make today look in the rearview mirror tomorrow?

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Embraer Praetor 600E

A true room with a view, the Embraer Praetor 600E offers a new cabin arrangement allowing for its 42-inch Smart Window curved display technology to stream to passengers on board as though they were sitting in a lounge or conference room, in a veritable third zone within the cabin. The Brazilian manufacturer received triple certification on the latest evolution of its super-midsize jet from the FAA as well as European and Brazilian aviation authorities.

With a 4,018-nm range and the ability to cruise at speeds up to Mach 0.83, the Praetor 600E is well-positioned to carry up to 12 of your friends, family, or colleagues across the country or over the pond, bringing city pairs such as New York-Rome within bounds. **Base price: $25.795 million.**

Daher TBM 980

Matching speed with elegant efficiency, the latest turboprop in the Daher TBM series—the TBM 980—brings sophisticated and intuitive technology to the flight deck with Garmin's G3000 Prime integrated avionics suite. With its innovative Garmin Autoland capability, any passenger can begin an emergency landing sequence in the event that the pilot becomes incapacitated. With a maximum cruise speed of 330 knots at altitudes up to 31,000 feet, the TBM 980 can take up to five people plus the pilot in and out of airfields as short as 2,535 feet in length (for departures).

In the cabin, you will find a passenger comfort display to give in-flight information and allow you to keep the environment to your liking. Each seat includes a 100W USB-C connection to keep devices charged, while the aircraft can be configured for satellite broadband connectivity when integrated with a Starlink Mini internet terminal. **Base price: $5.82 million.**

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Pilatus PC-12 Pro

If you need more space, yet also want to leverage the efficiency and flexibility of a turboprop, the Pilatus PC-12 Pro opens up more options for you within its voluminous cabin. With a maximum range of 1,765 nm and the ability to take off from grass, gravel, or even dirt airstrips just under 2,500 feet, the PC-12 Pro allows you to pack in all of the outdoor gear you want to take with you on your next adventure.

For executive transportation, refined ergonomics in the passenger cabin stem from your choice of BMW Designworks interiors or the Pro Launch interior line inspired by the Pilatus PC-24 jet, for up to nine seats that now fully recline. For passenger safety, the Garmin G3000 Prime flight deck includes Garmin Autoland capability along with connectivity and environmental comfort settings. **Base price: $6.8 million.**

Tecnam P2012 VIP

Italian manufacturer Tecnam has re-visioned its largest commuter aircraft into a stylish executive version it calls the P2012 VIP edition. Marrying the cost-effectiveness of twin piston engines with an in-house design sensibility, the P2012 can seat up to eight passengers in a high-wing cabin. Each seat offers eight degrees of fore, aft, and lateral movement, with a reclining backrest and retractable armrest, along with jacks for noise-canceling headsets.

Smart windows and adjustable LED lighting illuminate the workspace or rest area, depending on your mission at the moment. The airplane comes ready for Starlink with a dedicated USB-C port and additional outlets at each seat. With a range of 950 nm, the engines sip fuel at 173 knots, and the P2012 can make use of runways as short as 2,300 feet. **Base price, typically equipped: $3 million.**

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Cessna Citation M2 Gen3

Textron Aviation introduced the first of its "Gen3" product line for the Citation family with the debut of the Citation CJ4 Gen3, which took its first flight in October 2024. At that time, the other two Gen3 aircraft planned in the lineup were announced: the Citation CJ3 Gen3 and the Citation M2 Gen3. The M2 Gen3 is the second of the trio to take flight, which it did on June 2, with its entry into service planned for early 2027.

The M2 Gen3 incorporates natural and sustainable materials in the cabin, ambient accent lighting, and predictive maintenance diagnostics. The Garmin G3000 avionics include Garmin Autoland. **Base price, typically equipped: $6.15 million.**

Dassault Falcon 10X

When Dassault Aviation announced the Falcon 10X in May 2021, it unveiled the largest of the Falcon series in every category—by volume, by speed, and by range. The French manufacturer also constructed a modular aircraft mockup to allow prospective clients the opportunity to experience the proposed cabin layouts and haute-couture-driven design from the beginning while the company worked on bringing the 10X into reality.

In June 2026, Dassault test pilots took the 10X for a first flight, in the skies over Bordeaux-Mérignac Airport. The 10X features the widest and tallest cabin of any purpose-built business jet, 38 of the largest Falcon windows, and acoustic dampening perfected over the Falcon series for what is proposed to be the quietest in the skies. The 10X is powered by Rolls-Royce Pearl 10X turbofan engines. Entry into service is projected for 2029. **Base price, typically equipped, from $85 million.**

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Gulfstream G300

The latest among Gulfstream's family of business jets, the super-midsize G300 debuted in September 2025 at the company's headquarters in Savannah, Georgia. The G300 represents the evolution of living spaces in a midsized cabin in keeping with the expectations set by the model's larger brethren, particularly the G400, G700, and G800, but at the proper price point for this segment of the market.

The aircraft features 10 large-format panoramic oval windows bathing the cabin in natural light, 100% fresh air and plasma ionization system, and a lowest-in-class cabin altitude of 4,800 feet at a cruise altitude of 41,000 feet. With a range of 3,600 nm at Mach 0.80, those locales include city pairs such as Chicago-London. Gulfstream projects entry into service in early 2027. **Base price: estimated at $28.7 million**

Boeing BBJ 777X-9

If your vision of a perfect aerial experience requires an abundance of space, the ability to delineate private areas within the cabin, and plenty of rest and recharge in a stateroom with every possible luxury appointment, the Boeing Business Jet 777X will soon be available to answer all of those desires. The 777X-9 is undergoing test flight as of June 2026, and will offer the tallest, widest cross-section in the class, with 3,689 sq ft of area in the cabin.

Boeing's Smooth Ride technology uses advanced sensors to detect turbulence and actuate the flight controls to counteract any bumps in the air. Cabin altitude is further reduced from commercial versions of the 777X to lower it to 6,000 feet at the typical max cruise altitude of 41,000 feet. Range is truly globe-spanning, with trips from Los Angeles to Dubai, or Dubai to Auckland in reach. Boeing plans entry into service to follow the commercial debut of the 777X, sometime in 2027. **Base price: from $454 million.**

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SyberJet SJ36

Syberjet's SJ36 encapsulates the vision of the latest company (founded in 2011) behind the long-range light jet. Initial flight testing is set to begin in 2027, with entry into service planned for 2032.

The SJ36 will set itself apart with its maximum cruise altitude of 49,000 feet and the ability to maintain a sea-level cabin up to 41,000 feet. Range will also stretch beyond 3,000 nm, enough to take you from Los Angeles to Honolulu, according to the company. **Base price: estimated at $14 million.**

ROTARY WINGS

Airbus H140

Distinctive on the ramp for its unique T-tail design, the Airbus H140 twin turbine helicopter is the first clean-sheet offering from the French manufacturer in almost 10 years. While built with emergency services in mind, the aerodynamic design allows for an unmatched payload-to-range performance in its class of rotorcraft under 3 tonnes (6,614 pounds). An optimized enclosed ducted tail rotor system (or Fenestron) reduces noise, along with the five-blade bearingless main rotor. Flight testing on the six-seat H140 has gone through cold-weather environments, with hot and high-altitude flights taking plance in the summer of 2026. Airbus Helicopters targets an entry into service in 2028. **Base price: not yet released.**

Leonardo AW09

The single-engine turbine helicopter from Leonardo (formerly the Marenco Swiss-helicopter Sky SH09 and subsequent Kopter SH09 program) is again advancing towards certification, with both production models and flight tests taking place in concert. The first production unit, number S6, took flight in Vergiate, Italy, in August 2025, and flight testing now exceeds 1,000 hours on the eight-seat helicopter. With a range of 430 nm and a top speed of 140 knots, the AW09 offers a unique combination of efficiency and reach for short to medium hops. Multiple seat layouts in the executive-style cabin give flexibility to owners and operators. **Base price: estimated at $3.9 million.**

Sikorsky S-92A+

The legacy of the Sikorsky S-92 series helicopter continues, with its latest variant—the S-92A+—entering a ramp-up to production as of spring 2026. The twin-engine turbine helicopter has seen several improvements, including those to the gearbox that will improve safety and increase maintenance intervals. Increased shaft horsepower enhances the 19-passenger helicopter's ability to perform in high outside temperatures and at high elevations, and increases the maximum gross weight to 27,700 pounds—translating to an additional 1,200 pounds of fuel, passengers, and/or cargo. The A+ kit is also available to transition a current S-92 into the latest version. **Base price: estimated $27.5 million.**

Note: The print version of this story includes only one new aircraft per manufacturer. Please visit BJTonline.com to see an expanded version.

The Future Is Boomless

One of the deepest desires held by nearly all who travel is to get there faster. Unlike a rocket escaping the planet's gravity at incredible speed, aircraft in the atmosphere are limited in how fast they can fly by restrictions on sonic booms over land. Those limits are why Concorde never made economic sense, because it was restricted in the routes it could fly.

And that's why the promise of "boomless" supersonic flight is so tantalizing—and it's never been so close at hand. The boom-suppressing NASA X-59 flew faster than the speed of sound for the first time on June 5, 2026 reaching Mach 1.1 at an altitude of 43,400 feet. The X-59 project will help prove out the technology, which leads to a mere "thump" in the crossing of the sound barrier.

Boom Supersonic's aircraft uses similar boomless technology, and the project is in development at the company's headquarters in Centennial, Colorado. Its initial prototype platform, the XB-1, achieved supersonic boomless cruise during testing in January 2025, using Mach cutoff to break the sound barrier six times without generating a sonic boom that reached the ground. The company will apply those learnings to the Boom Overture, which will be powered by the 35,000 pound thrust Boom Symphony engine. An executive order in June 2025 lifted the restrictions to supersonic flight over the continental U.S., paving the way for Overture's boom-free testing to proceed.

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE ON THE OWNER'S SIDE

When owners have a real choice on maintenance coverage, service standards rise and costs come down. JSSI, the largest independent provider of maintenance support in business aviation, supports more than 30% of the world's business jets across its suite of solutions.

The value of private aviation is freedom: your time answers to you and no one else. Everyone who keeps your aircraft flying is someone you trust: your chief pilot, your director of maintenance, your flight department or management company.

But no team controls availability alone. Keeping an aircraft in the air depends on an entire industry of maintenance facilities, parts suppliers, manufacturers, and technicians. Your people manage it all proactively, but inside a system that was not designed around you. Therefore, a question worth asking: **among everyone else involved, who is working in your interest rather than their own?**

WHY JSSI EXISTS

Manufacturers set the maintenance requirements, the service network grew up around them, and no one was aligned with the operator. So, in 1989, JSSI's founders built an organization on the owners' side, offering maintenance programs coupled with deep technical expertise. Today, JSSI is the largest independent provider of maintenance support and financial tools to the business aviation industry, supporting more than 6,500 aircraft globally across its suite of solutions, over 30 percent of the world's business jets.

"If we were an airline, we would be the world's largest. At JSSI, we focus exclusively on business aviation, and advocating for our clients is at the center of everything we do. It's why we're here," says Neil Book, Chairman, President and CEO.

BUILT FOR BUSINESS AVIATION

Commercial airlines fly identical aircraft thousands of hours a year on fixed schedules, backed by a robust and standardized supply chain. Business aviation is the opposite and requires a different service model: dozens of manufacturers, hundreds of makes, models, and engine types, flying on demand a few hundred hours a year. How an aircraft is flown shapes how it must be supported, and JSSI was built for this world.

Each JSSI engine technical specialist sees 40 to 60 off-wing events a year; a director of maintenance might see five in a ca-

reer. Because business jets fly everywhere, JSSI is everywhere: nearly 100 technical advisors stationed around the world.

WHAT INDEPENDENCE GIVES YOU

JSSI answers to no manufacturer or maintenance facility; we answer to you. Our job is to create competitive tension to ensure you're getting the highest quality, best pricing, and most efficient turn times. Our position lets us put the entire market to work on your behalf: more than 500 maintenance facilities worldwide, from manufacturer-owned shops to independent MROs and in-house teams.

When your aircraft needs work or a part, we are free to recommend the best option anywhere, manage the event from start to finish, and make sure the work done is the work needed, at a fair price. We do not turn wrenches or compete with those who do. We are an extension of your team, working alongside your flight department or management company, never in place of them.

And your money stays yours. The funds you pay in are held in an independent trust, earmarked strictly for your aircraft's maintenance, with transparency.

JSSI'S CAPABILITIES

If you last evaluated JSSI years ago, you evaluated a different company. Maintenance programs remain at our core, but the capabilities around them now span the full lifecycle of ownership.

Over the past 10 years, organically and through acquisition, JSSI has expanded into 4 complementary verticals. Conklin supplies trusted, objective cost and performance benchmarking data for all business jets; JSSI Aviation Capital offers flexible asset-based financing; Traxxall is a leading maintenance tracking software solution; and JSSI Parts & Engines has become the largest independent provider of all-OEM parts and rental engines.

The value of JSSI becomes clear when it matters most: when your aircraft is down, a part is on back order, and MRO slots are full. At that point, how many options can your provider access? We are not confined to OEM inventory or shops. We can pull from our own parts inventory and rental engine pool, or leverage vendor relationships built over decades, focused on getting you flying again in days, not weeks. Your priority is ours.

SUPPORT FROM DAY ONE

Some believe independent programs exist mainly to support older aircraft, while factory-new jets belong on a manufacturer's program. That is no longer true. Today, roughly one in five new midsize and larger business jets enrolls on JSSI's 100% coverage program at new aircraft delivery; on certain models, as many as one in three.

Covered by JSSI: engines, airframes, and APUs across virtually any make or model.

The most demanding, expensive maintenance events come with age, not in an aircraft's first years. An organization that has spent decades solving the hardest problems on in-service aircraft is, by definition, prepared to support one from its first flight hour. Enrolling at delivery means those events, most arriving after warranty coverage ends, are funded from day one, while JSSI's technical team manages warranty claims and the program covers the gaps a warranty leaves behind.

"Our reputation was built on solving hard problems: the unexpected AOG, the engine event far from home, the part no one else can find," says Francisco Zozaya, Chief Commercial Officer. "That service mindset, and the technical depth behind it, is exactly what new aircraft deserve. Enrolling at delivery is often the smart way to begin ownership: budget certainty from the first hour flown, specialists working alongside your team, and a program that supports the aircraft's value long-term."

The program also travels with the aircraft, supporting resale value. And owners who upgrade, typically every five to seven years, can even transfer accrued funds to a different model with JSSI.

STILL ON THE OWNER'S SIDE

For most business aircraft, from engines to airframes to APUs, maintenance coverage comes down to two options: the manufacturer's program, or JSSI. Bringing JSSI into the conversation gives you the power to choose. It also keeps the market honest: service standards rise, pricing stays competitive, and every owner is better served.

Before your next acquisition, or your next program decision, ask your team to speak with JSSI. You will be better off with two options on the table, whichever you choose. Start at jetsupport.com.

Ready for Anywhere

In an uncertain world, the difference between stranded and safe is having a plan.

By Charles Alcock

MIDDLE EAST

Missile and drone activity, short-notice airspace restrictions, rerouting, and airport security concerns disrupted airspace and security across parts of the Middle East.

Dubai was long hailed as one of the safest destinations in the world for wealthy travelers—until it wasn't. But even after Iranian missiles and drones hit targets in the UAE in retaliation for U.S. and Israeli air strikes, it seemed that few with a local connection to the Gulf money pot wanted to acknowledge that safety in Dubai could be an illusion—not least because local authorities started jailing anyone who publicly acknowledged this inconvenient truth on social media.

The travel turmoil created by the outbreak of war in the Gulf has raised questions about the assumptions travelers make about their safety—even those traveling in private aircraft. Security experts have long cautioned against complacency when it comes to geopolitical instability, warning that asymmetric warfare can drastically change the equation in assessing risk.

When the Iran war erupted, hundreds of private jets were stranded in the Gulf states. These included a mix of aircraft based there as well as those visiting, or passing through en route to another destination. As air corridors were closed, passengers and crew were trapped. Once airspace reopened, departure slots were generally offered first to government-backed airlines like Emirates.

In some cases, travelers paid as much as $6,000 to be escorted through the desert in SUVs to seek flights in Saudi Arabia and Oman. Others just had to wait it out with thousands of airline passengers hunkering down in the face of an open-ended conflict.

Danger, Disruption, and Distress

While the risk to one's life may not have been that high, there is no denying the disruption and distress that was caused. Family weddings, births, and time-sensitive business commitments were missed, triggering extreme anxiety for those stranded as well as their loved ones.

In time, a few private aircraft were moved out of the immediate war zone via countries on the edge of the region, such as Turkey. As flight activity resumed, insurance companies bulked up premiums and imposed rigid operating requirements in response to the direct targeting of civil airports by Iran's Revolutionary Guard.

One operator, speaking with **BJT** on condition of anonymity, said they had been barred by their insurance company from parking at any Gulf airport for more than four hours. They were required to drop passengers off and then move the jet to Cairo, only to return to Dubai later to complete the mission. This resulted in six hours of additional flight time and added costs of around $100,000, including rapidly spiking insurance premiums.

According to security advisors at risk management group MedAire, it's not a safe bet to assume that flying privately is less risky than traveling on the airlines. The company told **BJT** that the Iran war has "tested many assumptions" previously made about business aviation security and that "the sector should learn from these lessons rather than treat the period as an exception."

John Cauthen, MedAire's vice president for aviation and maritime security, warned that business aircraft can be sig-

nificantly exposed because they are more visible. Private aircraft sometimes have to use facilities that are less secure than main airport terminals. In his view, risks on the ground are not always as thoroughly assessed as factors such as airspace closures, yet both are critical and should be assessed with information that is as close to real-time as possible.

"A risk picture developed two weeks before departure doesn't reflect what's happening locally that week," Cauthen explained. "In a volatile environment, conditions can shift considerably in a short window."

Ask Tough Questions

According to Eric Schouten, who founded Dyami Security Intelligence and is a former officer of the Dutch intelligence and security service, too often wrong assumptions are made about who is handling and taking responsibility for security. He urges travelers to ask tough questions of those providing their flights and travel services.

> "Those who had contingency plans had a lot less disruption than those who did not."
>
> — Matthew Borie, co-founder of Osprey Flight Solutions

"When you do security the right way, it [private aviation] is still the safest option," he told **BJT**. "The ones who [aren't used to going to dangerous places are particularly at risk]—but if you have an aircraft with global range, at some point you will go somewhere dangerous."

Flexjet's Global Operations Control Center in Cleveland, Ohio, monitors the location and status of the fleet 24/7.

Travelers headed to risky areas need to have an escape plan, according to industry experts.

Matthew Borie, co-founder and chief intelligence officer of security support provider Osprey Flight Solutions, echoed concerns over wealthy travelers' complacency about the shifting risk environment. What unfolded in the Gulf states did not amount to the sort of extreme violence former military officer Borie saw in places like Iraq or Afghanistan, but he said there is a strong case for getting professional guidance "to evaluate your exposure to an environment that can change very quickly."

A prime example is what happened in Kuwait. Once an initial ceasefire kicked in from April 8, there were no attacks in the country until May 27, when a military base came under Iranian fire. Within days, Kuwait International Airport was once again under fire from missiles that killed one person and injured several more, resulting in an immediate airspace closure for foreign aircraft.

What Is Your Escape Plan?

"You need to be aware of your options if trouble flares up quickly," Borie said, "things like the shelter-in-place process. How does the country you are in give emergency alerts, and will you get them? If you have an aircraft, do you have the ability to take off at short notice, or could that process take 24 to 48 hours? What are you going to do if the airport closes? Do you have a plan to escape by land, and what travel documents might you need to do that?"

Wealth alone is no guarantee of safety and flexibility. "Don't think just because you have the resources that you will be able to do what you want," Borie said. "Plan for [security events] and don't make impulse decisions."

Failure to plan and to acknowledge possible risks can make travelers susceptible to unrealistic promises made by flight providers. The Iran war also revealed how price gouging can quickly escalate, with astronomical amounts being paid for charter flights that could be arranged at short notice.

Fractional ownership and charter flight provider Flexjet says it takes security very seriously. The company, a customer of Osprey Flight Solutions, told **BJT** it has invested heavily in security expertise and a technology platform that allows it to assess public and private intelligence sources.

Knowing When To Say No

Each day, the Flexjet operations team meets to determine where it is and isn't safe to fly clients. If a trip request is deemed unsafe, Flexjet explains this to the client and, whenever possible, offers alternative itineraries. Of course, this can mean saying no to customers who are not accustomed to hearing that word.

"These days, passengers have to be prepared to be agile, because they will not be able to take every flight they might want," said Flexjet CEO Andrew Collins. "We have been very conservative [about security] but remain agile. We plan a primary route and alternative routes. The number one thing we have with our customers is trust, and we are not putting that at risk."

According to Collins, if travelers approach a charter provider who immediately says yes to a trip to somewhere with any kind of risk profile, they should immediately challenge the operator for more information about security measures. "Ask about your concerns. Ask when they last flew that route, and ask them what they have in place to mitigate risk. If you hear nothing but reassurance, it could be that the company simply doesn't have access to all the facts."

> “...the first 24 hours are often the most critical. The faster we can assess the reality of the situation, the sooner we can provide clients with...solutions.”
>
> — Aniko Mersek, president of the Americas region Chapman Freeborn Airchartering.

Collins believes the business aviation sector remains very safe, and he says that the challenges of the last five years have better equipped the industry to deal with instability. “Whether it has been Covid, government shutdowns, or [the U.S. attacks on] Venezuela, [these] created a forced nimbleness [on the part of aircraft operators],” he explained. “If you cannot keep up with geopolitical events, it is going to be very tough to scale up your operation. We learned a lot from Covid about how to take the right precautions to keep everyone safe.”

Charter flight broker Chapman Freeborn has its own risk department and a 24/7 operations center that constantly monitors factors that could disrupt trips and put clients at risk. According to Aniko Mersek, president of the group’s Americas division, it only works with reliable operators that include security arrangements as part of their standard operating procedures.

While stressing that clients are ultimately responsible for staying informed about security threats, Chapman Freeborn says it has “rigorous internal processes” to manage risk. “As a solution provider, we must always have a plan B,” Mersek explained. “Unexpected events, such as natural disasters, po-

MedAire helps clients navigate the challenges of preparing for travel in risky regions and dealing with adverse situations once underway.

litical conflicts, public health issues, and other disruptions, can impact the safety of clients and the success of their trips. Our goal is to anticipate challenges, mitigate potential disruptions, and ensure our clients can travel as safely and seamlessly as possible."

Since the start of the Iran war, Chapman Freeborn's teams in Dubai and Riyadh have had to provide real-time assessments of airspace closures, aircraft availability, fuel supplies, airport operating conditions, and other critical operational factors. The group was directly involved in arranging many of the flights booked to evacuate people from the conflict zone.

"In these situations, the first 24 hours are often the most critical," Mersek said. "The faster we can assess the reality of the situation, the sooner we can provide clients with accurate information and solutions. Transparent and continuous communication with both carriers and clients is essential, particularly in environments where conditions can change with little warning. An airport that is operational one moment may close the next, requiring immediate contingency planning and alternative route options."

London-based Tri-Tier Training security consultant Aran Dharmeratnam specializes in "getting people out of bad situations." This can mean applying "physical disengagement skills," but he stressed to **BJT** that the better strategy is staying out of harm's way in the first place.

"Proxy warfare, which could involve organized crime and street gangs, is on the rise, and artificial intelligence platforms are now being used to identify patterns in the risks," he explained. "Private jet companies could be doing more because there are gaps in protecting pilots and passengers."

Osprey found that clients who had been ready to anticipate what could happen emerged from the crisis in a better situation. "Those who had contingency plans had a lot less disruption than those who did not," said Borie. BJT

MedAire: Dealing with Today's Bizav Travel Challenges

BJT asked MedAire's vice president for aviation and maritime security, John Cauthen, to spell out what private aviation travelers need to know to keep safe in a dangerous world, and how the industry could do better.

What steps can passengers take to mitigate risks?

Before the trip, the most valuable step is a structured assessment that extends beyond the flight itself. What are conditions like at the specific airport? Where is the crew staying, and is that the right choice given what's happening in that city that week? Is there a major event, a summit, or active civil unrest likely to coincide with the stop? Is the last-mile transport arrangement appropriate, and has anyone actually thought about it from a security standpoint? These are the questions that often don't surface until something goes wrong.

John Cauthen

MedAire vice president for aviation and maritime security

Crew readiness is also more important than it tends to get credit for. A crew that recognizes early warning signs of escalating activity, knows how to disengage calmly if approached by media or demonstrators, and understands exactly who to call if things deteriorate is in a meaningfully better position than a crew getting that guidance for the first time mid-incident.

On the passenger side, basic preparedness is often overlooked: a passport with adequate remaining validity, a sufficient supply of medication to cover unexpected delays, copies of key documents stored separately from the originals, some local currency, and a clear understanding of whom to contact if the situation changes. Operators should be building this into pre-trip passenger briefings for any elevated-risk destination.

What should travelers expect of those who operate the aircraft?

This is worth being direct about because expectations don't always match reality.

At minimum, passengers should expect that the operator has done some structured thinking about the security environment—not just the airspace, but the ground. A professional operator should be able to explain how security conditions are assessed for a given trip, who is responsible for monitoring changes while the aircraft is at the destination, and what escalation support is available if the situation shifts.

On the ground-handling side, third-party handlers and local agents are essential partners, but their role is typically logisti-

cal. Operators should not assume that a standard ground-handling arrangement automatically includes a current security assessment of the airport, the surrounding area, or the crew accommodation.

A useful test for passengers evaluating an operator's seriousness: ask who is monitoring conditions for the trip; what happens if something changes while you're on the ground; and whether the crew has been briefed on current conditions at the destination. The quality of the answers will tell you something.

What lessons can be learned from the Middle East conflict?

The speed of escalation compressed decision timelines and exposed gaps in planning, monitoring, and decision authority. From late February into the spring, missile and drone activity, short-notice airspace restrictions, rerouting, and airport-adjacent security concerns affected parts of the region that many operators had previously treated as relatively stable. Operators with alternate routing plans already built and active airspace monitoring in place were better positioned to respond when conditions changed quickly. Where that process was not in place, teams were forced to make high-consequence decisions under significant pressure.

Jamming and spoofing of satnav signals remain a serious problem.

On the ground, movement toward the airport was not automatically the right call. During active hostilities, a congested airport environment can create its own exposure, particularly when large numbers of foreign nationals converge on limited departure options. In some cases, remaining in a secure location with current intelligence and a clear movement plan may be safer than moving before a viable departure route exists.

The right decision depends on a real assessment of airspace status, available lift, airport conditions, and whether a verified departure route actually exists. Evacuation capacity was constrained during this period, and viable lift options were not always available when travelers wanted them. The practical takeaway is: define your decision thresholds before you're in-country, not once conditions are already deteriorating.

Ceasefires and de-escalation arrangements don't automatically normalize the aviation environment. The arrangement reached in early April reduced immediate hostilities, but airspace restrictions, global navigation satellite system (GNSS) interference, fuel constraints, and continued military exchanges all persisted in the aftermath. Operators who reduce their monitoring posture in response to a ceasefire announcement may be exposed if conditions change again. The right approach is to treat de-escalation as a direction of travel, not a resolved condition, and to maintain active monitoring until the environment is genuinely stable.

What about the risks from GNSS navigation systems and drone attacks?

GNSS interference through signal spoofing and jamming across the eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea corridor, and the Strait of Hormuz was significant throughout the conflict and remains unresolved. This isn't new in the region, but the intensity during the conflict elevated it from a background concern to an active operational factor. Operators transiting affected corridors need procedures to recognize and manage navigation degradation. Practical measures may include cross-checks, crew procedures for recognizing spoofing or jamming, and communication contingencies appropriate to the route. And it's worth noting that this isn't a Middle East-only problem. The same pattern—military activity driving GNSS degradation—has been tracked across the Baltic region, Eastern Europe, and parts of Central and South America.

The drone picture is also worth raising, because it extends well beyond active conflict zones. Over the past 18 to 24 months, drone activity targeting or affecting aviation infrastructure has increased in both frequency and sophistication. Systems now range from low-cost commercial quadcopters to more capable loitering munitions. The most exposed areas are airports and their immediate surroundings. And this isn't limited to conflict regions. Drone incursions and suspected spillover activity have disrupted or threatened aviation operations across parts of Northern, Eastern, and Central Europe. Pre-flight uncrewed aircraft system assessment is no longer a niche consideration. It belongs in standard planning for any elevated-risk destination. C.A.

Safety Management Systems: Everything You Need To Know

What the 2027 SMS mandate means for charter passengers

By Gordon Gilbert

In the wake of recent high-profile accidents and incidents involving both commercial and private operators, business aircraft charter customers have been reaching out to their providers for reassurance of safety protocols. This passenger concern is timely because providers of air taxi lift can inform them that they are either already in compliance with, or in the process of complying with, a new set of requirements that aim to improve safety, even surpassing the already excellent standards of the business aviation community.

Passengers on private and air taxi aircraft should be aware that the flight departments providing their lift are already adhering to high standard operating procedures required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), aircraft owner/operator company policy, or both. In April 2024, air taxi/charter providers, air ambulance operators, air tour opera-

tors, and major parts manufacturers were given three years to prepare a new all-encompassing guidance document—the safety management system (SMS). The compliance deadline is May 28, 2027.

How SMS Evolved

In a nutshell, an FAA SMS is intended to be a comprehensive tool for improving safety and risk factors of aviation-related air and ground operations under both normal and emergency circumstances. The concept of an SMS was first proposed nearly 30 years ago. In 1997, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the U.S. agency responsible for investigating aviation accidents, introduced the SMS concept and recommended it for transportation organizations.

For nearly three decades since, NTSB investigations into accidents in various modes of transportation, including aviation, have regularly cited organizational factors as major contributors to accidents. The agency has repeatedly issued recommendations that SMS be adopted as a way to prevent future accidents and improve overall safety. Over the 16-year period spanning 2007 through 2023, the Safety Board issued 18 recommendations to the industry and the FAA regarding SMS for aviation organizations. While Safety Board recommendations do not have the force of law, recipients are required to respond with their intentions.

In 2009 and 2012, the FAA chartered two government advisory and rulemaking committees (ARCs) to provide advice on implementing SMS in aviation regulations. Industry stakeholders on these ARCs included individual companies and trade associations representing private and charter business aircraft operators, design and manufacturing suppliers, repair stations, and training organizations. These ARCs expressed industry support for SMS and recommended that the FAA publish rules requiring the use of SMS by aircraft operators as well as larger maintenance companies and major airports.

In 2015, the FAA published its first aviation SMS rules and required implementation by all U.S. airlines. Over the ensuing years, the agency has expanded the SMS requirement to apply to major airport and maintenance operations.

On April 26, 2024, the FAA published its long-anticipated SMS rules for air taxi, air ambulance, air tour operators, and specified manufacturers—with compliance expected no later than May 28, 2027. When the final rules were adopted, the FAA estimated they covered approximately 1,848 Part 135 operators (all but four had fewer than 1,500 employees) and 1,056 air tour operators (about a third of which had only one aircraft).

Importantly, new applicants applying to be an air taxi or air tour operator after the effective date of the rule, April 26, 2024, must have an SMS as part of their original operator

A Case of Failing to Adhere

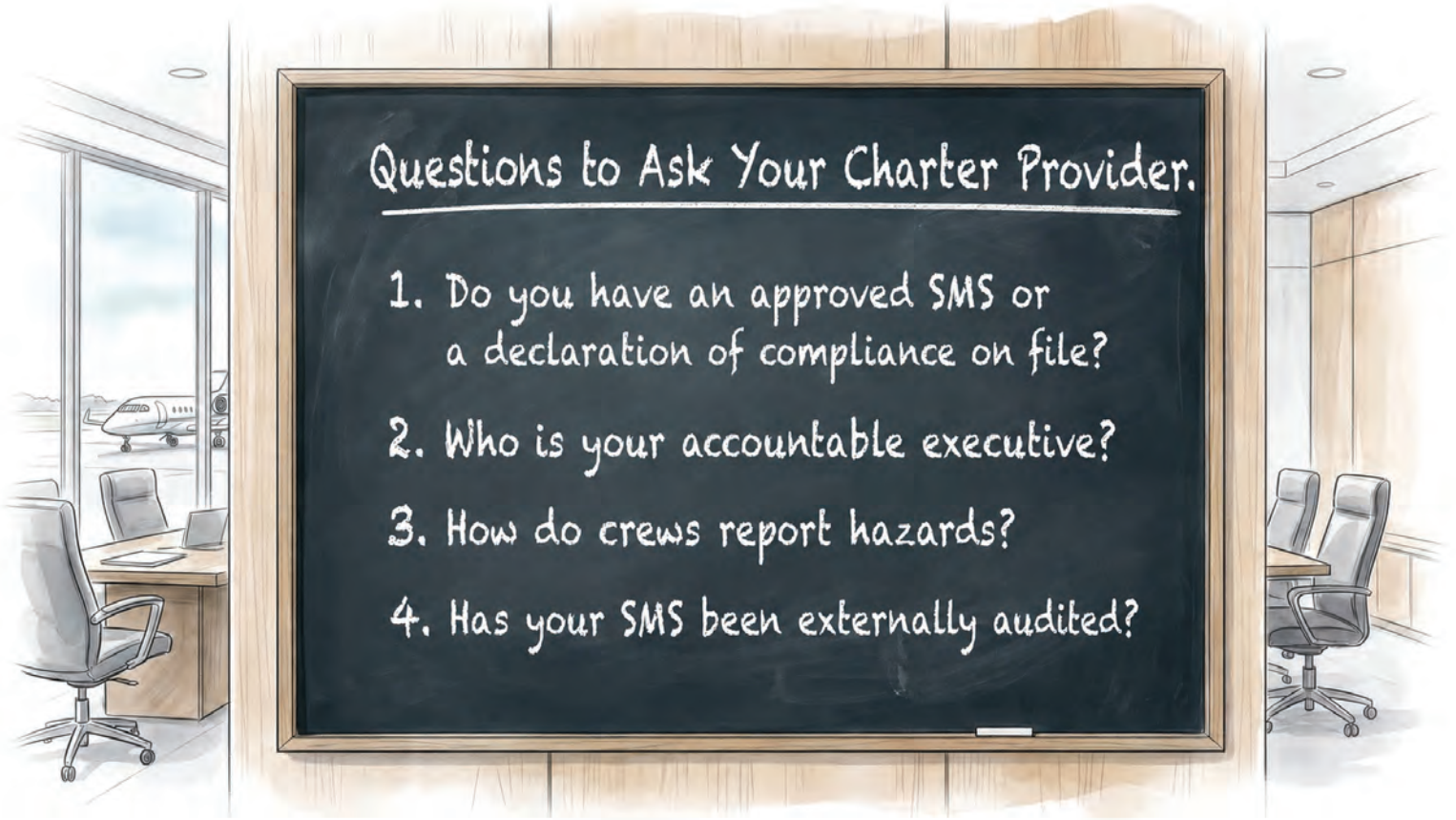
Not having a formal safety management system—not precisely following the SMS you already have—has been cited as a cause or factor in several accidents. One of the most notable accidents in which an operator's SMS was not sufficiently followed was the Jan. 26, 2020, crash of an air taxi Island Express helicopter that killed all nine aboard, including former basketball great Kobe Bryant.

With the assistance of a vendor using both FAA and international guidance, Island Express had an SMS since 2013 that was not required at the time by the FAA. According to the SMS manual, the director of operations (DO) was the designated accountable executive who reported to the company's president and had ultimate responsibility for the SMS. When interviewed, the president said he was aware of the SMS but was not involved with it or in the company's day-to-day flight operations.

A review of the SMS manual and interviews with the DO, safety officer, and other company personnel revealed that Island Express used "select" SMS tools provided by the vendor. The company did not implement the entire program as outlined in its SMS manual. The NTSB concluded that one of the accident causal factors was Island Express Helicopters' "inadequate review and oversight of its safety management processes."

The FAA regional inspector said he was aware of the SMS but was not involved with its development or oversight. Had Island Express' SMS been required by the FAA, it would have been subject to FAA oversight to "inspect the SMS for alignment with FAA objectives and to provide feedback to help the company implement the entire program."

Another finding in the final report serves as a lesson to aircraft owners who are also business aircraft passengers: they are also responsible in making sure the SMS is being followed correctly and completely. Island Express received external safety audits from three companies that were generally favorable, and the company was not required to address all the noted items. There were no records to indicate that Island Express opted to perform any of these noted items. The report for an August 2018 audit noted, in part, that the company was not using all of the available SMS tools, particularly the safety committee meetings, formal tools to measure the effectiveness of the SMS, and other measures to manage change processes.



application for certification. New and pending applicants for manufacturer production certification will be required to submit SMS implementation plans as part of their certification process. Once an implementation plan has been submitted to the FAA, applicants will have 36 months to start using their SMSs.

Although U.S. private and fractional owner business aircraft operations are not yet required to have safety management systems, some of these operators have still submitted an SMS under a formal FAA voluntary program. Interestingly, pressure for implementation has often come directly from aircraft owners and private and fractional owner passengers, who have learned about the SMS initiative on their own.

How Passengers Are the Focus

A safety management system, as described by the FAA, is a "formal, top-down, organization-wide approach to managing safety risk and ensuring the effectiveness of safety risk controls. It includes systematic procedures, practices, and policies for the management of safety risk. An SMS is a management system integrated into an organization's operations that enforces the concept that safety should be managed with as much emphasis, commitment, and focus as any other critical area of an organization."

As a required minimum, an SMS must include the following four components: safety policy, safety risk management, safety assurance, and safety promotion. The SMS objective is to reduce incidents, accidents, and fatalities "by aiding aviation organizations in identifying hazards and mitigating the risk of those hazards before they lead to an incident or accident." Advocates of SMS contend that by identifying hazards and controlling and continually assessing risk and safety performance, an SMS promotes a company-wide culture of safety.

Notably, air taxi companies in the process of building their SMS have pointed to passenger conduct as a safety hazard. Not fastening seatbelts, ignoring crew instructions—and above all—pressuring the pilots to land at the destination airport regardless of adverse weather conditions, have led to serious accidents. Consequently, don't be surprised when the crew shows you an excerpt from their company's SMS about passenger expectations, if the circumstances warrant.

The new regulations require a so-called "accountable executive" to assume overall responsibility for maintaining and updating the SMS. In larger organizations with their own flight departments and a charter division, this duty usually falls to the flight department manager or a designated top executive. The executive would also likely be a frequent and senior passenger. In smaller organizations, SMS integrity often falls to the aircraft owner or chief pilot.

There is a heavy dose of documentation and record-keeping requirements. The FAA says this paperwork is necessary because of the mandate for providing notification of hazards to a so-called "interfacing person," that, to the best of the notifying person's knowledge, could address the hazard or mitigate the risk. For example, interfacing persons for an air taxi could be any organization that the operator conducts business with, such as a fixed base operator (FBO), a repair station, airports, or the aircraft manufacturer.

An operator's customers, however—such as revenue passengers—would not ordinarily be considered interfacing persons because passengers are not responsible for or expected to contribute to the safe operation of the aircraft (besides not interfering with the operation).

The total package is not only intended to comply with minimum standards and regulations, but also places increased emphasis on the overall safety performance of the organization. It must encompass: flight operations; operational control (who has responsibility for a specific flight); dispatch and flight following (tracking the position of each aircraft); maintenance and inspections; cabin safety (passenger expectations); ground handling and aircraft servicing; regulatory compliance; and training.

Sources of Assistance

Your lift providers do not have to attempt the arduous task of drafting an FAA-acceptable SMS program alone. There are excellent sources to help in the process, including at least two guidance documents from the FAA itself. The first, simply called Safety Management Systems (SMS), is a wealth of information that breaks down the regulatory legalese and complex wording of the rules into plain language explanations of all key elements.

Another helpful FAA document is a 130-page advisory outlining the steps needed for creating an SMS. This document can assist private aviation organizations in receiving "FAA acknowledgment" of their voluntary SMS. Additionally, the advisory provides organizations with a method to meet International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 19, which is a management framework for an SMS acceptable to ICAO member nations, including the U.S.

The Rest of the World

The U.S. is far from being the only country to require SMS manuals. In fact, many nations have outpaced the U.S. schedule. For instance, Canada's existing SMS regulatory framework, introduced in 2005, is in the process of being updated. It applies to major airports, maintenance facilities, private operators, and air taxi providers.

By Dec. 2, 2026, all Australia-registered air transport operators (including air-taxis) must have in place: an SMS; a safety manager accepted by the country's Civil Aviation Safety Authority; a human factors and nontechnical skills training program and; a flight data analysis program for certain operators. These requirements began on Dec. 2, 2021, for then-new operators.

Because air taxi and commercial air tour operators range widely in complexity and size, the document states that SMS policies, methods, and procedures can be "tailored" as needed. Importantly, it provides examples of how an organization may integrate "new practical, economical, and effective SMS methods and procedures that complement their existing operations and processes while leveraging the policies, procedures, or methods already in place" that comply with SMS requirements.

To emphasize the scalability of SMS to all sizes of operations, the rule itself includes examples of how small aviation organizations, such as a single-pilot operator, could scale implementation of their SMS requirements to the size and complexity of their organization. For instance, confidential hazard reporting is not required for certain single-pilot organizations.

A number of private companies market SMS consultation services, and aviation trade associations offer help to their members in building an SMS. These organizations and other groups supporting operators to transition to the SMS expect inquiry levels to increase as the deadline nears. However, operators are experiencing delays in getting their proposed SMS approved, mainly caused by incomplete information submitted to the FAA.

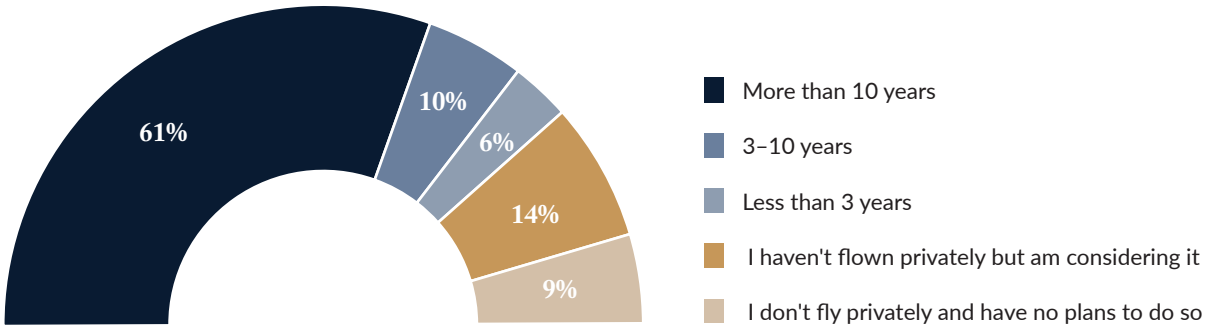
With only a few months remaining until implementation is required, an FAA spokesperson in the second quarter told BJT that 191 (about 10.5%) of 1,815 air taxi operators have submitted to the agency their declaration of compliance. BJT

BUSINESS JET TRAVELER'S 16th ANNUAL

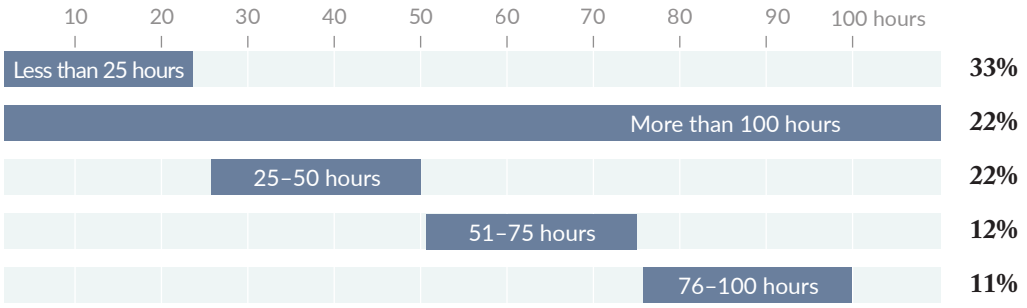
Readers' Choice Survey

Every year we ask what you fly, why you fly, and what you would change. Here is what you told us. And as promised, every completed survey generated a contribution to Corporate Angel Network, which arranges free flights on business aircraft to carry cancer patients to treatment.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN FLYING PRIVATELY?



ABOUT HOW MUCH DO YOU FLY PRIVATELY IN A TYPICAL YEAR?



PLEASE INDICATE WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING YOU HAVE DONE IN THE PAST TWO YEARS OR PLAN TO DO WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY).

43% Fly via a corporate-owned aircraft

36% Fly via charter

34% Fly in my own aircraft

17% Fly via fractional-aircraft share

17% Fly via a jet card or membership club

THE FIRST TIME YOU EVER FLEW PRIVATELY WAS...

36% On my company's aircraft

34% On a friend's aircraft

10% On a charter flight I booked

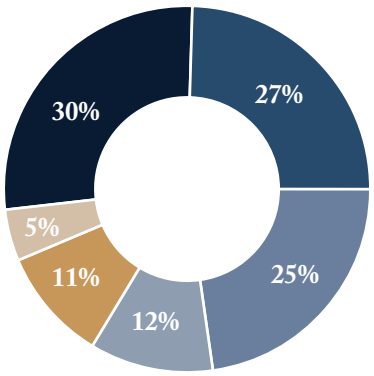
9% On an aircraft I wholly owned

8% On a colleague's aircraft

2% On an aircraft I fractionally owned

1% Via a jet card I purchased

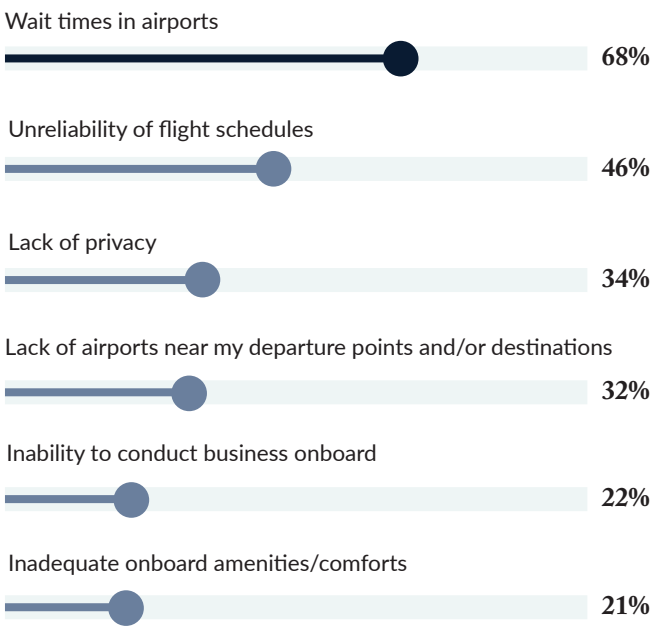
DO YOU OR DOES YOUR COMPANY SUPPLEMENT FULL OWNERSHIP WITH ADDITIONAL LIFT?
(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)



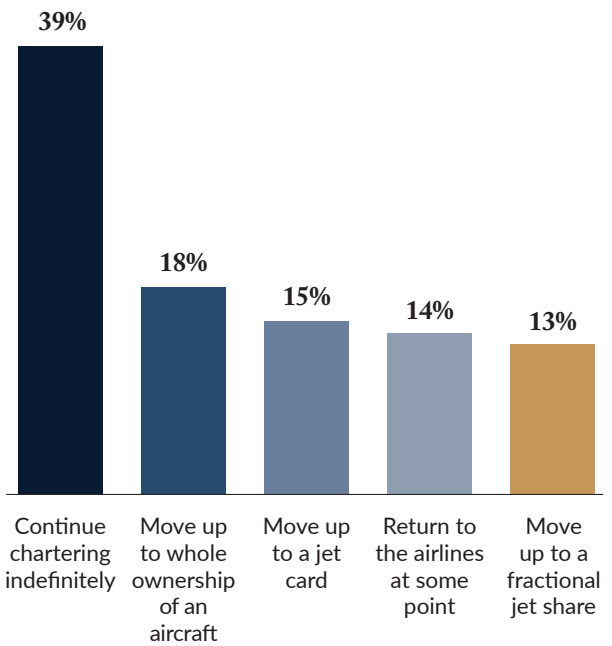
- 30% My company/flight department does not supplement with charter or fractional
- 27% My company/flight department uses supplemental charter
- 25% I use my own aircraft and do not supplement with charter or fractional
- 12% My company/flight department owns one or more fractional share
- 11% I own aircraft and also take charter flights
- 5% I own aircraft and also own one or more fractional share

Note: Percentages don't always equal 100 due to rounding.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU LEAST LIKE ABOUT AIRLINE TRAVEL?

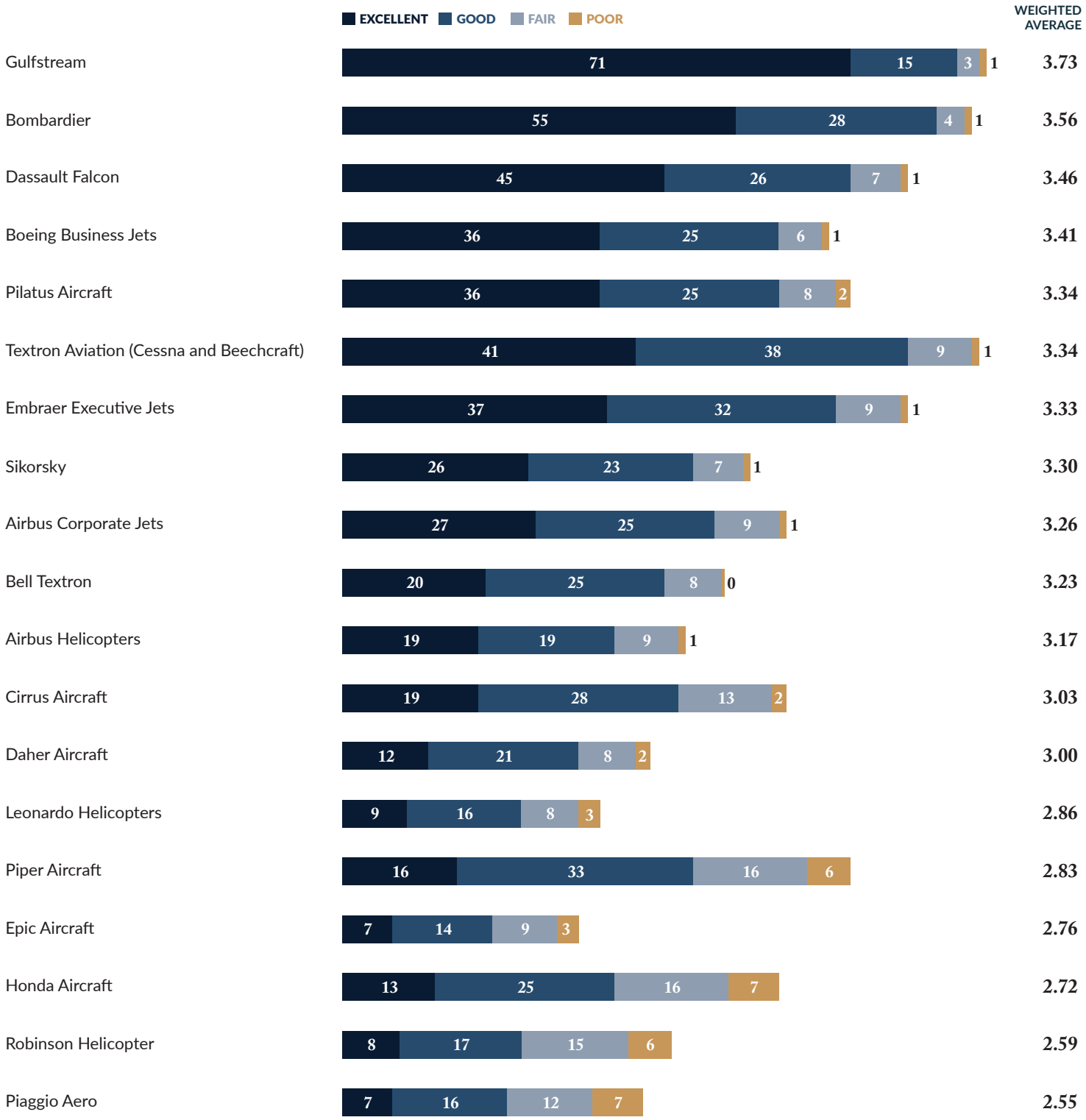


IF YOU FLY VIA CHARTER, DO YOU PLAN TO...



Note: Percentages don't always equal 100 due to rounding.

OVERALL IMPRESSION OF AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURERS

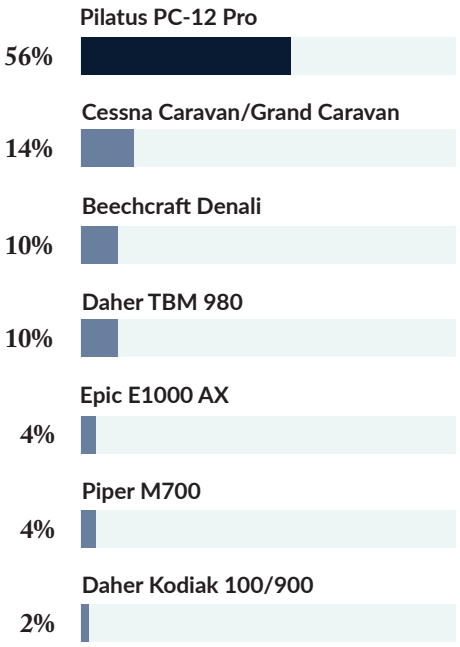


*Results exclude respondents who answered "Don't know/not sure." **Determined by assigning points to ratings: Excellent (4), Good (3), Fair (2), Poor (1)

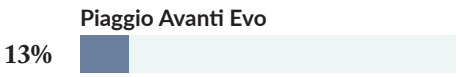
Note: Percentages don't always equal 100 due to rounding.

IF YOU COULD REGULARLY FLY ON ANY OF THESE AIRCRAFT, WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE IN EACH CATEGORY?

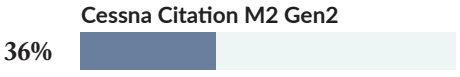
SINGLE-ENGINE TURBOPROPS

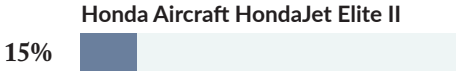


TWIN TURBOPROPS

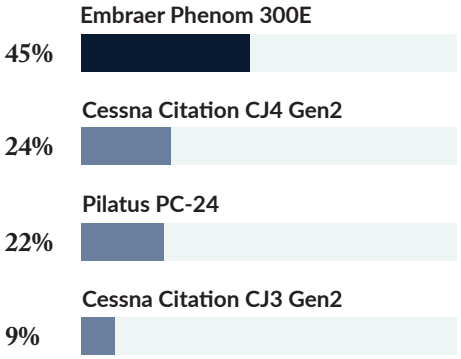


VERY LIGHT JETS (VLJs)

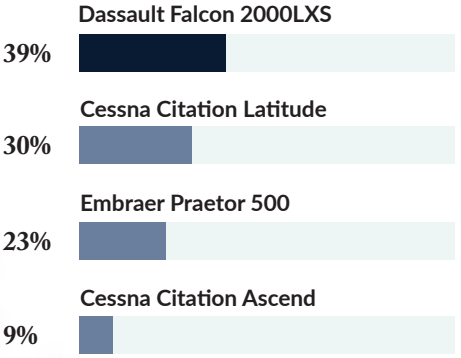




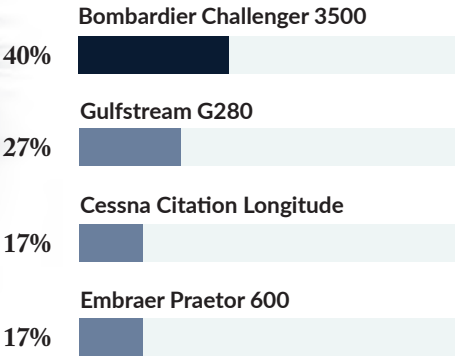
SMALL-CABIN/LIGHT JETS



MIDSIZE-CABIN JETS

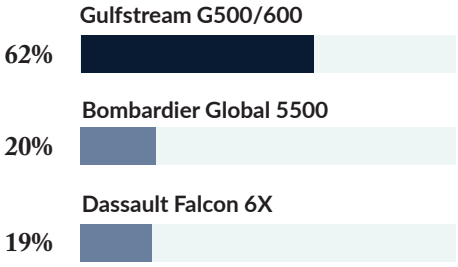


SUPER-MIDSIZE-CABIN JETS

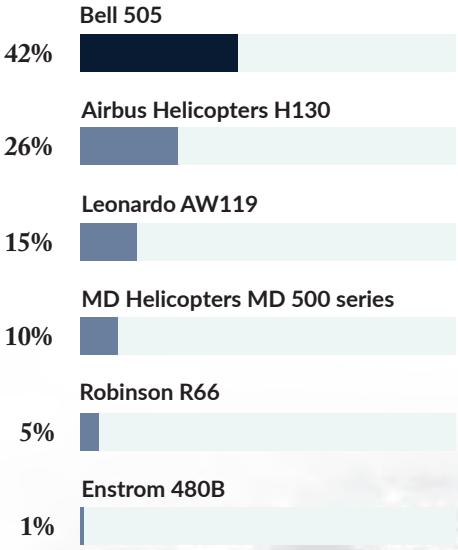


Note: Percentages don't always equal 100 due to rounding.

LARGE-CABIN JETS



LIGHT SINGLE-TURBINE HELICOPTERS



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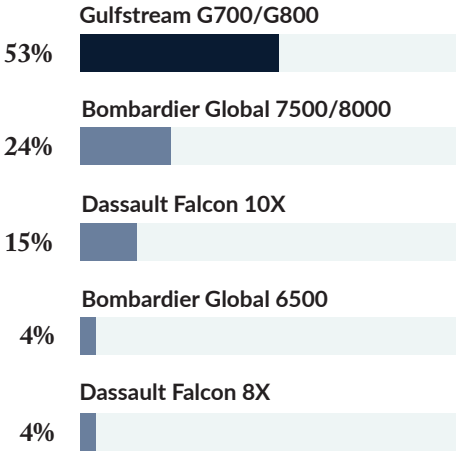

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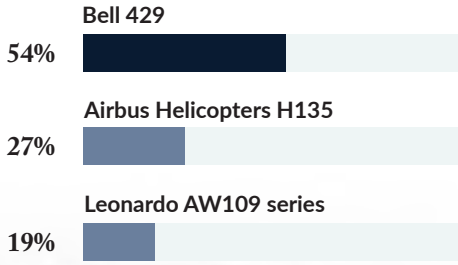

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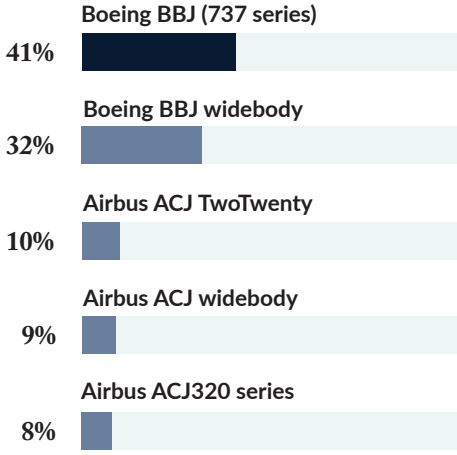

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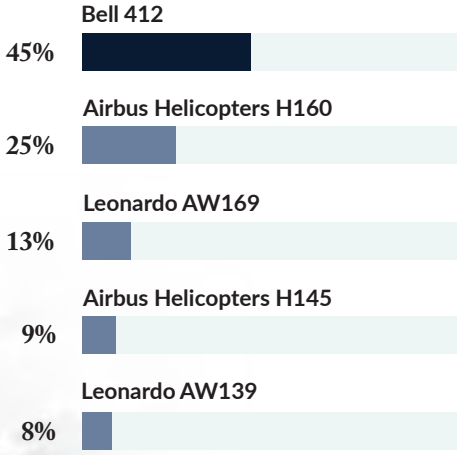

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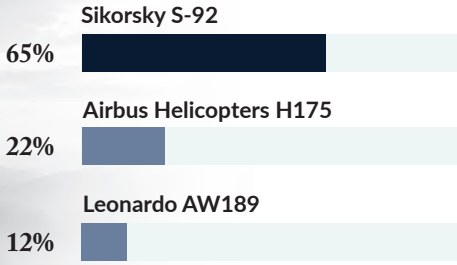

Note: Percentages don't always equal 100 due to rounding.

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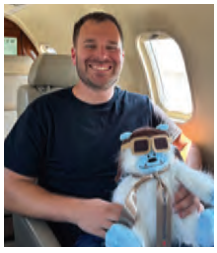

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Making Sense of the Mix

Are fractionals, jet cards, or whole ownership best for you?

By Julie Boatman

Private aviation has evolved dramatically over the past five years. You might be weighing charter, fractional, and jet card programs—or eyeing a move into whole aircraft ownership and trying to figure out which option, or combination of them, fits best. Either way, you're spoiled for choice.

What Are My Options?

On-demand or ad-hoc charter offers the highest degree of flexibility: just the flight you need, when you need it. Exposure to risk includes premium pricing if you fly more than 15 to 25 hours per year, as well as not necessarily knowing your aircraft and crew, unless you charter through the same provider regularly. Building that relationship can deliver a more personal experience.

Jet card programs represent the next step, with the ability to purchase a block of flight hours to be used over a given time period, and within the confines of a certain fleet or aircraft model. By pre-paying, you will likely save over the single-flight purchase price, but you risk overpaying if you don't use up the block of hours. Some companies offer rollovers of jet time to the next year or period, and others allow for resale, so read the fine print. Jet cards that cover mixed fleets offer more flexibility.

Fractional operators allow you to lease a portion of an aircraft without having to take on the expense and commitment of a whole aircraft purchase. While your fraction share limits you to one aircraft type, supplemental lift options within a given provider may grant you limited flexibility if your mission requirements change for a given flight.

Buying an aircraft outright—known as a whole aircraft purchase—gives the highest degree of privacy, control, and choice of aircraft to personalize for your lifestyle and missions. You know your crew and the aircraft's maintenance history, and you alone decide the schedule. But ownership conversely has the highest degree of limitation to one aircraft, often leading to the need for supplemental lift when your ride is undergoing maintenance. It also can mean taking on a lot of additional responsibility.

The current market for preowned aircraft remains tight, and wait times for new jets stretch to 24 months, so fractional

programs may be the best option for immediate lift. According to Global Jet Capital's report released in May 2026 and covering the first quarter of the year, preowned aircraft available for sale as a percentage of the total installed base was lower in Q1 2026 than Q1 2025, declining from 7.2 to 6.7%. Manufacturer backlogs rose 19.3% year over year in Q1 2026, reaching $57.1 billion for the four manufacturers that reported Q1 results.

Empty leg flights offer another option that a broker can help you navigate. Essentially, if your travel time is flexible, you can wait for an opening on a positioning or booked flight on a specific managed aircraft that takes you where you want to go for less expense than an outright charter. Companies such as Moove and Execaire Aviation present varying options but offer everything from a single seat on a Citation CJ to an entire Bombardier Challenger 604 or Global 6000, seating up to 17 people.

One step removed from the airlines, "semi-private" charter travel includes companies such as JSX, which departs from private terminals away from the crowds, and caps its jets at 30 passengers.

The Right Questions

A good broker or consultant will most likely start by asking which trips you are planning to take in a given year. Narrowing down city pairs will help you determine a key metric: How many flight hours per year do you require? Typically, below 100 or 150 hours points to a fractional or jet card as your best bet while more than that gets into recommendations to buy the whole airplane.

City pairs will also determine the size and propulsion of the transport you seek. Are those trips only achievable with a long-range jet, or are they more efficiently served by a midsized or light jet? Could you leverage the savings, airport access, and low profile of a turboprop? If your needs are widely disparate, you might consider a fractional or whole aircraft program plus additional charter lift in alternate aircraft. Many top fractional programs offer this type of supplemental lift as part of their total package.

Most people have more than one set of missions to accomplish. For example, you may have three new franchises in the Southeast U.S. to visit regularly over the next 18 months; then your next development project will take place in Brazil. Add in planned family vacations, backup for emergency or unplanned trips, and you realize the answer won't be as immediately clear. As Doug Gollan, founder of Private Jet Card Comparisons, based in Miami, Florida, says, "We do a lot of research with our subscribers, and I view it more as pieces of the puzzle. Most people require multiple solutions." The common wisdom that a certain number of hours flown each year equals one option over another doesn't always hold true.

Bryan Smith, CEO of Zenflight, a charter and aircraft management company based in Farmingdale, New York, agrees. "It's less about buying an airplane, and more about buying back time, control, and quality of life. First, how much are they actually flying, and what does it look like? Alone or with a group? Overseas? Business or family trips?"

Smith finds that clients move into fractional or whole aircraft programs when their needs run up against the natural limitations of ad- hoc charter. "The downside to charter is that everybody tends to fly to the same place at the same time," Smith says, noting events like the FIFA World Cup, the Super Bowl, and the Sundance Film Festival.

"It's tough to find good quality aircraft and operators at a decent price point; if they need to fly at those times, charter can be a challenge compared to the reservation systems within fractional or jet card programs."

Tailoring the Model to Fit

Shawn Dinning, senior partner at Dallas Jet International, has been in the aircraft brokerage business for 20 years. "It used to be that fractional was almost always the stepping stone toward a whole airplane," says Dinning. "Now the traffic runs both directions. We see fractional owners step up into a whole aircraft, and we see whole owners step back into fractional."

As the number of jet card offerings continues to explode, pay close attention to the fine print, as it varies considerably between companies. If you're considering jet card programs

as part of the mix, keep in mind the cliché that if something looks too good to be true, it probably is. Smith offers his take: "It's a very interesting business model, and it's built to give you the feeling of having utmost flexibility and a guaranteed aircraft. But remember, these programs are not built with a model where the seller loses money—it's kind of like the house always wins in the end."

Still, if your needs match one of the top fractional or jet card programs, you can find a good fit to either supplement your own aircraft or cover you while you decide where to make an investment. Many of the highest-rated companies achieved that ranking because they know how to cater to their customers—and reap operational efficiency and availability for a good balance.

Wheels Up is among the private flight operators that have streamlined their fleet to match the models most favored by clients: in Wheels Up's case the Embraer Phenom 300 and Bombardier Challenger 300. The company, which competes with larger rivals such as NetJets, Flexjet and Vista, also boasts a cooperative agreement with Delta Air Lines to give those who need to connect with premium scheduled flights.

The company could be right about its choice in jets because the latest WingX data shows the Phenom 300 and Challenger 300 to be the most popular jets in North America. That said, the Cessna Citation Excel/XLS model takes the top spot over the Phenom in Europe. Overall, the operator that is committed to fleet renewal will offer the latest equipment to customers with a mix of improved cabins and more efficient operations.

Luxaviation, based in Europe, offers a blended model of shared ownership and charter to suit its client base, recently ordering a Cessna Citation Latitude to add to its fleet of Citation CJs.

The need for operational control—and special requirements, such as an adaptive cabin—leads one to choose whole aircraft ownership, unless you can source a charter or fractional operator that caters to a particular need. For example, for those who must have their animal family members on board, Vicuna Air is among the growing number of providers that offer shared private jet travel with your pet.

Staying Legal—and Safe

A trap that the unsuspecting may fall into in the private aviation world is one set by unscrupulous or corner-cutting operators advertising their wares without the proper certifications to execute them.

The operator must carry certifications based on where it flies and how it provides services; the crew must be properly licensed; and the aircraft must meet its original "fit to flyness" (airworthiness), as well as meet ongoing maintenance milestones. Finally, within the aircraft's state of registry, other qualifications may be needed for proper registration and communications requirements.

The FAA has posted a list of certified aircraft operators on its Safe Air Charter website following recent updates to the resource. Operators, brokers, customers, and industry stakeholders can use the database to verify whether an air charter operator holds a valid FAA certificate. The site also links to a resource that provides additional operator information, including "doing-business-as" details.

Gollan also suggests tapping into another well-respected resource: "Ask Argus International for one of their TripCheqs," he suggests. The TripCheq reviews an individual flight for its crew and aircraft qualifications, as well as a current operating certificate. Other operators utilize Wyvern PASS reports, and Gollan suggests, "I would recommend asking for either or both if the operator participates in both programs."

No matter which pieces of the puzzle you choose, private aviation travel has evolved right along with its clients' needs, and increasingly, customers need a multi-pronged solution. As Dinning puts it, "People are getting smarter and more sophisticated—and people know that a whole airplane can't do everything all the time, and neither can fractional ownership. It's not purely an economic decision anymore." BJT

The Luxury of Choice

Top private travel providers in 2026—and ones to watch

By Julie Boatman

A new fractional or jet card provider seems to launch every week. Enough to make you wonder: is the grass greener somewhere you haven't looked?

Fortunately, the top companies stay relatively stable year after year, joined by a small handful of up-and-coming prospects worth a look. We surveyed the landscape for you, using data based on Argus tracking for North American flight hours analyzed by Private Jet Card Comparisons' Doug Gollan. Here, we review the steadfast market leaders and a few alternative options.

NetJets

Once again, NetJets has topped the list as the largest private aviation operator, with 55,737 hours posted in 2025 via Argus TraqPak (including NetJets' Executive Jet Aviation charter division). NetJets also saw nearly 12% revenue growth in Q1 2026. That size brings strength in its ability to provide the lift you signed up for, with fewer concerns about downtime for its fleet. The company continues to expand and upgrade its fleet as well: NetJets has taken delivery of its first of many Cessna Citation Ascends from Textron Aviation—the newest of the XLS series began arriving on the scene on May 5. The official number of

NetJets

Flexjet

NetJets airplanes actively flying stands at 858, and that includes three of those new Ascends. The installation of SpaceX's Starlink satellite communications is in progress on roughly 600 aircraft in the NetJets fleet, including U.S.-based Cessna Citation Latitudes and Longitudes, Embraer Praetor 500s, and Bombardier Challenger 350s, 650s, and Globals, as well as its Europe-based Challenger 650s and Globals. The company expects completion of these installations by the end of 2026.

NetJets also offers its NetJets card program, with the ability to purchase up to 320 days of annual access in increments of 25 flight hours. However, in late July the company confirmed that it is restricting card sales in order to balance high demand with service delivery. It has also reportedly curtailed lease sales.

Flexjet

Flexjet distinguishes itself in several key areas, including the nod to fly into Saudi Arabia (along with competitor Vista). Based in Cleveland, Ohio, with its global command center at Cuyahoga County Airport, Flexjet operates a fleet of roughly 340 aircraft. And it's about to get bigger: Flexjet has plans to expand that fleet significantly with an order for 50 aircraft from Gulfstream, including the G500 and G700 ultra-long-range models. This comes in addition to a deal announced with Embraer in 2025, committing to 182 aircraft, with an option for 30 additional models, in a blend of Phenom 300Es, Praetor 500s, and Praetor 600s. That $7 billion order, combined with the latest Gulfstream contract, will bring the total Flexjet fleet to more than 600 aircraft by 2031. Flexjet caters to those who plan to fly more than 50 hours annually with fractional and lease programs. The company also offers jet card options to either supplement the main own/lease contract or serve those flying less. Flexjet also provides a helicopter option in the Sikorsky S-76, which seats up to eight passengers in an executive interior for trips up to 2.5 hours.

Vista

Vista recently took delivery of its new flagship, the Bombardier Global 8000, so if your goal is getting there faster than anyone else, take note: The Global 8000 reached a supersonic milestone of Mach 1.015 during its flight testing campaign. While you'll need to settle for a cruise of Mach 0.95 to avoid sonic booms, that's still a speedy ride in the ultra-long-

range, large-cabin segment. The 8000 joins a fleet of Globals and Challengers—nine models in the Bombardier segment—along with the Gulfstream G450 and IV-SP, Embraer Lineage 1000E, Legacy 600/650, and Praetor 600, Cessna Citation XLS/XLS+, and Dassault Falcon 7X. That fleet supports three membership categories. The program membership requires no investment in a fractional; you're paying only for the hours you fly, at a fixed hourly rate. The VistaJet VJ25 offering requires prepayment of 25 hours up front, and up to 49 hours on a pay-as-you-go basis, with guaranteed availability on non-peak (and most peak) days. A Corporate membership is much like the Program tier, but open across a business.

XO, Vista's on-demand digital charter platform, runs on an app/platform model with three main ways to fly: instant online charter booking, by-the-seat jet sharing on existing flights, and a deposit-based membership. It sells dynamic pricing membership in the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East, plus on-demand charter with instant online booking and jet-sharing options. XO also recently expanded into Asia in order to give the region more flexible, transparent flight options.

Vista

Wheels Up

Wheels Up is still striving to achieve a net profit on its private flight services as it implements a restructuring plan with support from its majority shareholder Delta Air Lines. The turnaround is in part based on expansion of market share from its Air Partner charter broker division, which arranges flights for Wheels Up and Delta first-class travelers beyond North America. The Atlanta-based publicly traded company recently retired its legacy fleet in favor of transitioning to a new lineup. The slimmed-down fleet features just the Bombardier Challenger 300s and Embraer Phenom 300, based on customer feedback and aimed toward efficiency of operations. The restructured Signature Membership program, rolled out in late 2025, is tailored to those who fly frequently but don't wish to have the capital investment of a traditional fractional program. The Charter Up program targets those

Wheels Up

FlyExclusive

PlaneSense

who fly a bit less and need more flexibility. Both offerings leverage Wheels Up's deep ties to Delta, with logistics in place to connect both Signature and Charter members into commercial travel on the U.S. airline and its partners.

FlyExclusive

With an eye toward profitability, FlyExclusive spent the first three months of 2026 working on its goal of having 12 Bombardier Challenger 350s in its fleet and operational by the end of the first quarter. The dispatch reliability of the 350 is a key reason why the Kinston, North Carolina-based company has homed in on this aircraft as it positions its 100-aircraft-strong fleet for future success. FlyExclusive will grow again once it completes the transaction to acquire Jet AI's legacy aviation operating business, including Jet AI's existing customer base and fleet of Citations and HondaJets.

FlyExclusive recently joined the ranks of authorized Starlink Aviation dealers and is moving to equip its fleet with the popular satellite communications system, starting with its Challenger 350s. Because FlyExclusive delivers a full palette of private aviation products and services, with charter, aircraft management, fractional options, and a jet card program, the company aims to serve every need of its private aviation customers.

PlaneSense

Few fractional providers put all their chips behind one manufacturer, but Portsmouth, New Hampshire-based PlaneSense has bet on Pilatus for more than 30 years. It's certainly paid off. The company launched with the multipurpose Pilatus PC-12 turboprop and, in 2015, was named the launch customer for the Pilatus PC-24. In 2018, PlaneSense added the versatile PC-24 to its fractional and CobaltPass jet card programs. Today, the company flies 45 PC-12s and 17 PC-24s, serving throughout North America, the Caribbean, and into Central America.

A partnership with Jetfly, based in Luxembourg, allows PlaneSense members to use the Jetfly Pilatus fleet within Europe and into North Africa. Charter options abroad expand further with PlaneSense's agreement with CaptainJet, also based in Europe. With the ability of both

the PC-12 and PC-24 to access relatively short and unimproved airstrips, PlaneSense can take its clients to remote and limited locations where other providers simply cannot go.

Solairus Aviation

Solairus Aviation

Solairus, which was founded in 2009, has grown to encompass a fleet of more than 360 aircraft and employ more than 2,300 team members at more than 100 bases across the U.S. In early August it announced plans to acquire aircraft management and charter group Clay Lacy Aviation in a move that would take its fleet to more than 500 aircraft.

The company, with headquarters in Purchase, New York, and Petaluma, California, focuses on aircraft management. Solairus clients have the ability to charter from the company's managed fleet, which offers a range of flexible solutions. Solairus assigns a dedicated team member to each client in its aircraft management program for completely personalized attention. It has recently added a similar light jet and turboprop management program as well.

Our Watch List

While the top of the list attracts much of the attention, we're keeping our eye on a handful of both new and expanding operators worth noting.

Nicholas Air

Nicholas Air

Building on a core of light jets—including the popular Embraer Phenom 100—Nicholas Air began up-sizing its fleet in earnest when it took delivery of its first Gulfstream G600 in December 2023. And it's been leveraging those larger jets ever since. The privately-owned Oxford, Mississippi-based company offers a mix of jet cards, jet leasing, fractional programs, and aircraft management, so it can truly be a one-stop shop for a client who needs a variety of lift options. Nicholas Air owns and operates its own fleet and crews, as opposed to leasing either one, which gives them the ability to provide exceptionally personal service. The Nicholas fleet also

features the Pilatus PC-12, Cessna Citation CJ3+, Embraer Phenom 300E, Cessna Citation Latitude, and Bombardier Challenger 350.

Tradewind Aviation

Tradewind Aviation/ Fly Epic

We've been on the lookout for programs that leverage smaller aircraft, which are often more efficient and/or sustainable than their large-jet brethren. Operators using single-engine turboprops such as the Daher TBM 900 series or the Pilatus PC-12 can provide significant value for the right customer. Tradewind Aviation, based in Oxford, Connecticut, has paved the way with its PC-12 fleet in both luxury airline-style and private charter operations—much like PlaneSense has with its fractional offerings.

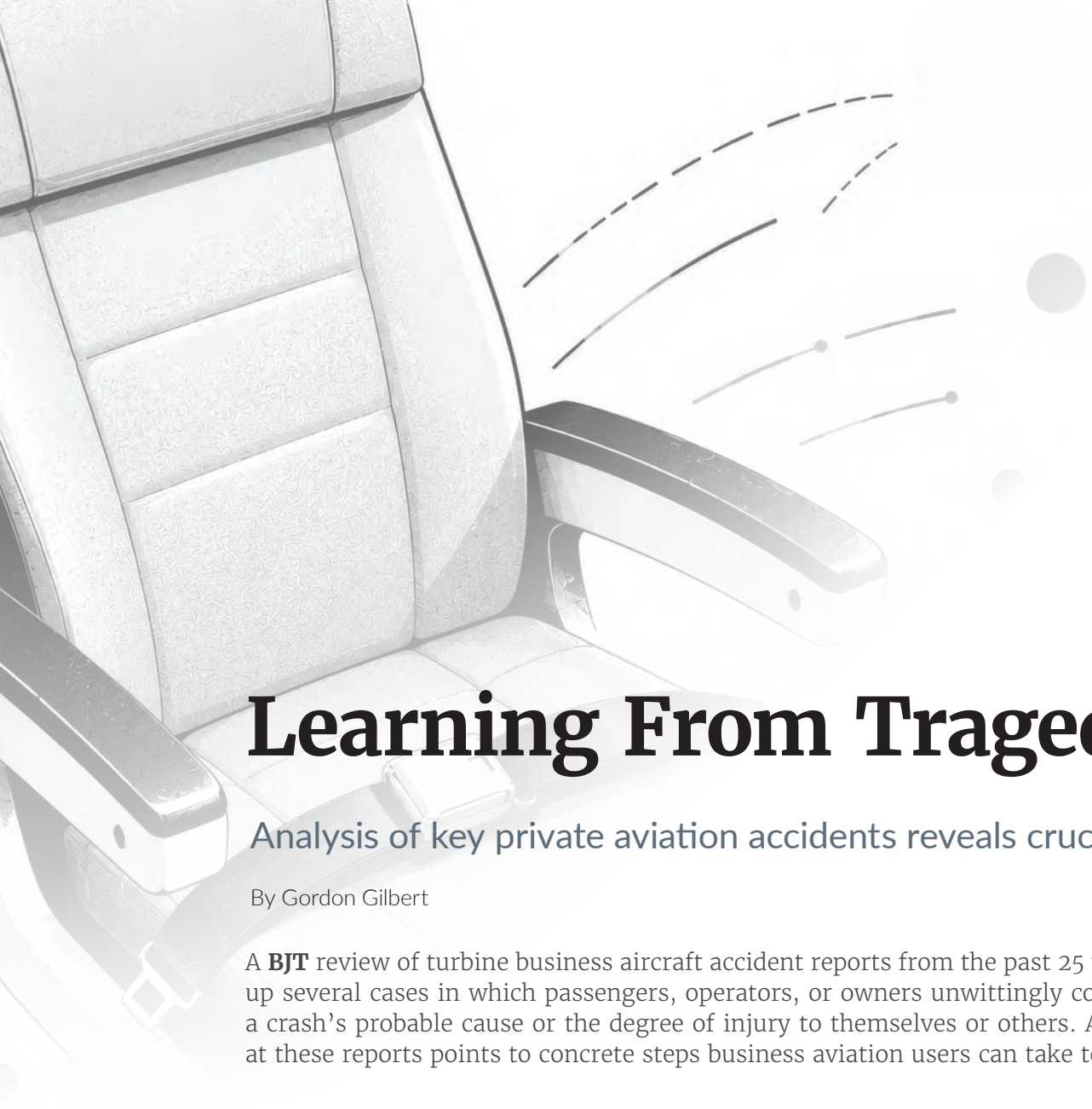
New on the scene: FlyEpic, which launched in May, flies fractional customers in its Epic E1000. The Epic turboprop is a rocket, moving along at more than 330 knots, and flies high enough to avoid raindrops and bumps. Both the Epic and the PC-12 hold more cargo than you'd think, so for both short hops and small groups, they are worth a look. These nimble aircraft can get you in and out of airfields that larger jets are not capable of using, including destinations around the Caribbean.

Hera Flight

Hera Flight

One company on Gollan's PJCC radar is the growing Hera Flight, co-headquartered in Clearwater and West Palm Beach, Florida. The company focuses on super-midsize and large-cabin aircraft, including nine Cessna Citation Xs with coast-to-coast legs and speed, five Gulfstream GIVs and a GIV-SP, a classic Cessna Citation I, and two Bombardier Learjet 60s.

Hera is adding five additional aircraft onto its charter certificate this year, bringing the fleet to 25 aircraft, according to Gollan. The company launched a jet card three years ago, and it also conducts transactions in the wholesale market. All five aircraft will be immediately available for on-demand charter, jet card redemption, and charter management programs. BJT



Learning From Tragedy

Analysis of key private aviation accidents reveals crucial lessons.

By Gordon Gilbert

A **BJT** review of turbine business aircraft accident reports from the past 25 years turned up several cases in which passengers, operators, or owners unwittingly contributed to a crash's probable cause or the degree of injury to themselves or others. A closer look at these reports points to concrete steps business aviation users can take to stay safe.

BUCKLE YOUR SEATBELT

Here are a few incidents to remind you that not having your seat belt or harness buckled when seated—or instructed to do so by the crew—continues to be one of the most common ways to get injured in flight.

- On June 6, 2019, in a light privately-operated twin-engine business jet, the pilot had anticipated some turbulence along the route of flight, briefed his three passengers, and turned on the seat belt sign. As far as the pilot was aware, all the passengers were seated with their seat belts on during the turbulence. One of the passengers was an elderly man, and another passenger was his caregiver. The caregiver reported that she had gotten out of her seat to assist the elderly man in adjusting his restraints more firmly. During the time she had gotten up to aid him, she was thrown about the cabin from the turbulence. The pilot landed the airplane as soon as possible, and the caregiver was treated at a local hospital for a fractured right arm.

- A Christmas eve 2015 accident involving a small privately-owned single-engine turboprop resulted in the pilot and one passenger receiving minor injuries. Two passengers received serious injuries, one of whom was found out of her seat, unconscious, on the floor of the airplane. It was unclear if she was unrestrained at the time. She died several months later due to complications from her injuries. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)—the U.S. independent federal agency responsible for investigating serious aircraft accidents—could not determine if she had properly used the restraint system, as it was found unlatched with the seat belt portion of the assembly extended. A post-accident functional check of the aft seat belts found them to be operational.

- An air taxi twin-engine turboprop was in cruise flight on Jan. 13, 2021 when it suddenly encountered 30 to 45 seconds of severe turbulence. One of the three passengers was not seated and sustained serious injuries. The injured passenger reported that she struck her head on the overhead ceiling compartment, then fell onto the armrest. At the destination airport, the passenger was met by emergency medical personnel, but she declined additional medical treatment. The passenger reported that she sought medical treatment the following week and learned she had a fractured rib. Mechanics performed a functional check of the seat belt and found it to be operational. The NTSB determined the probable cause of this accident to be: An encounter with severe turbulence, which resulted in serious injury to an unseated passenger. The report did not state whether the fasten seat belt sign was on at the time of the turbulence.

BEWARE THE BLADE

There are numerous and tragic accounts of passengers seemingly ignoring crew instructions and walking into turning airplane propellers and helicopter tail rotors.

- On April 4, 1996, following the landing of a privately-owned, high-wing twin-engine turboprop, a passenger died after failing to heed ground personnel instructions. The pilot stated he had taken the passenger along for the first drop of parachutists. After landing he stopped at the ramp and left the engines running while the next load of parachutists were loaded. He told the passenger to exit through the rear door and that ground personnel would help her out. He then remained in the pilot's seat. The passenger exited the airplane through the rear door and was instructed by ground personnel to walk to the rear of the airplane. Instead, she turned suddenly, walked forward and was struck by the left propeller. The NTSB's brief investigation report did not include a determination why she did not follow instructions or if she may not have heard them.

- On June 6, 2006, an air taxi single-engine turbine helicopter with the pilot and three passengers was on a daily oil platform check. The pilot asked his passengers if they had any questions on aircraft safety. He also said he had briefed and flown with these passengers before, and that the passengers indicated that they had no questions regarding safety or emergency equipment. After landing, with the helicopter facing the helideck's staircase and with the engine idling, two of the passengers exited the helicopter and

proceeded down the stairs located forward of the helicopter. A few minutes later, one of the passengers reappeared from the same stairway and approached the helicopter from the front. The remaining passenger entered the helideck from a stairway facing the aircraft's tail, approached the helicopter from the rear and suffered serious injuries when he walked into the idling helicopter's tail-rotor. The NTSB determined the accident was caused by the "passenger's failure to follow procedures associated with operations in the vicinity of the helicopter."

- A passenger on an air taxi twin-engine turbine helicopter, who had been reminded several times on the day of the accident to stay away from the rear of the helicopter, was killed when the passenger exited the aircraft before the pilot gave the okay, walked to the rear, and was struck by the turning tail rotor. At the end of the flight, on June 30, 1990, the pilot was unaware that the passenger had exited because the pilot had not given the okay for passengers to deplane. When the pilot felt the helicopter shudder and heard a loud noise, he immediately shut down the engine and exited with the other two passengers. The passengers had been briefed as to the areas to avoid around the helicopter and the passenger that perished "had been reminded at least three times during the day to stay away from the rear of the helicopter," according to the final NTSB investigation report. The agency concluded that the "passenger did not follow the procedures associated with the operations in the vicinity of the helicopter."

CONTROL THE CONTROLS

- On Aug. 23, 2025, after noticing approaching weather, the pilot of a private single-engine turbine helicopter elected to return to the landing site from which he had departed. After landing, while the main rotor was turning at reduced power, the helicopter suddenly rolled over onto its right side. The pilot reported that while turning to speak with the rear seat passenger, the front seat passenger inadvertently touched one of the aircraft's controls that would be used if a copilot was in that seat. Perhaps the passenger shouldn't be held totally accountable in this case. The aircraft's flight manual noted that when carrying passengers "unfamiliar with helicopter operation," the pilot should consider removing the copilot controls "or accepting the potential hazard of leaving them installed." What's more, the NTSB said that "contributing to the accident was the pilot's decision to leave the dual flight controls installed with a non-pilot passenger in the front seat."

- Another example of a situation caused inadvertently by a front seat passenger happened on July 7, 2012, when the pilot of a private single-engine turboprop reported that during cruise flight, the engine suddenly lost all power. Unable to restart the engine, he made a forced landing in a bog. Afterwards, the pilot noticed that the emergency fuel selector

lever on the right side of the center console (between the pilot and passenger seats) had been moved to the shutoff position. The passenger, who was seated in the right seat of the cockpit, stated that he was unaware of the fuel lever and was not briefed on specific areas to be aware of in the cockpit but that he had been adjusting himself in the seat just before the engine quit.

- Here's a case of he said, she said, and the NTSB saying it didn't know. On Oct. 28, 1997, after an air taxi twin-engine turboprop landed and shut down power, the captain positioned himself near the bottom of the main cabin door stairs to direct the passengers deplaning. Nevertheless, a passenger fell and was seriously injured when she hit the pavement. The pilot claimed she tripped on her overcoat. The passenger, who did have a long coat draped over one of her arms, was wearing two- to three-inch spiked high heel shoes and said she fell after her left shoe got stuck on the stairs. When asked if she had tripped on her coat, she said she had not. An FAA inspector tried unsuccessfully to make her shoe fit into the hinged part of any of the steps. He also tried it with his smaller size shoe and "was unable to duplicate in any way, getting my heel stuck in the hinge of the step." The back of the step slants backwards and the rounded back of the heel prevents the bottom tip of a shoe from reaching that part, he said. The NTSB acknowledged she did indeed trip, but was unable to determine how, so simply concluded its investigation with "the passenger tripped for an undetermined reason."

- On July 26, 1989, there was another incident of a passenger being seriously injured from tripping. In this aircraft, the wing spar structure carries through from the wing on one side of the aircraft to the wing on the other side creating a hump that crosses the width of the cabin's aisle. While deplaning at night, the passenger tripped on the hump. The operator reported that it was visibly marked. While the NTSB cited the passenger for "failure to observe a raised and marked area" in the passenger cabin floor, it also determined that contributing factors were darkness and the aisle "designed with a raised area which partially obstructed its use." This design, incidentally, is not unique to this particular aircraft make and model.

- During the initial descent in an air taxi single-engine turbine helicopter on Jan. 1, 2003, the pilot felt a shudder and heard a noise. The helicopter began to yaw and then started to spin, and the pilot managed to make a controlled ditching where the aircraft came to rest partially submerged. A moment before the accident, one of the passengers reported he observed the right baggage door was "open and flapping." It was learned that before takeoff, that passenger loaded his baggage in the right aft cargo compartment and boarded the helicopter. According to the pilot, the passenger had previously received a safety briefing regarding the operation of the helicopter's doors and latches. Examination of the helicopter after the accident revealed the lower forward baggage compartment door had been closed but not latched. It subsequently opened in flight, allowing baggage to fall out of the compartment and hit the tail rotor blades—shearing off the tail rotor drive shaft. The NTSB said that a factor contributing to the cause of the accident was the "passenger's failure to follow the procedures for properly securing the helicopter's doors and latches."

Major Business Aircraft Manufacturers at a Glance

Shopping for an airplane or helicopter? Start by reading the key facts about the airframers whose products you're considering.

AIRBUS

BARRY AMBROSE

FOUNDED: 1970 | HQ: TOULOUSE, FRANCE | ACJ PRESIDENT: CHADI SAADE | INFO: ACJ.AIRBUS.COM

Airbus flew its first passenger jet, the A300, in 1972 with service entry following in 1974. The model marked the initial offering from what would become Europe's largest aerospace and defense company. Airbus forayed into the corporate jet market in 1997, and today the Airbus Corporate Jets business unit offers the ACJ TwoTwenty, ACJneo, ACJ330neo, and ACJ350.

AIRBUS HELICOPTERS

FOUNDED: 1992 | HQ: MARIGNANE, FRANCE | CEO: MATTHIEU LOUVOT | INFO: HELICOPTERS.AIRBUS.COM

Airbus Helicopters is the rotorcraft wing of Airbus. It was founded as Eurocopter Group and was rebranded as Airbus Helicopters in 2014. The company and its predecessor firms have been pioneers in rotorcraft development for decades. The product line includes entries in the intermediate-single, light-twin, medium, super-medium, and heavy segments, as well as Airbus Corporate Helicopters.

BELL

FOUNDED: 1935 | HQ: FORT WORTH, TEXAS | PRESIDENT AND CEO: DANNY MALDONADO | INFO: BELLFLIGHT.COM

Bell, a subsidiary of Textron since 1960, is an aerospace manufacturer that has developed civilian and military aircraft and rotorcraft since 1935. Currently, Bell manufactures the 505, 407GXi, 429, 412EPX, and 525 helicopters for the civilian market. Maximum passenger counts range from four in the 505 to 16 in the 525, which is expected to receive FAA certification in 2026. The company is also developing high-speed vertical takeoff and landing technology for military uses.

BOEING

FOUNDED: 1916 | HQ: ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA | BBJ PRESIDENT: JOE BENSON | INFO: BUSINESSJETS.BOEING.COM

The Boeing Company operates in 65 countries and maintains offerings across the aerospace realm, manufacturing aircraft, rotorcraft, rockets, satellites, and communications equipment for civilian and military clients. Boeing became one of the world's largest aerospace companies after its merger with McDonnell Douglas in 1997. Its civil aircraft offerings include the 737, 777, and 787. The company's Boeing Business Jets division offers narrowbody models of the BBJ based on the 737, while widebody models include the 777 and 787.

BOMBARDIER

FOUNDED: 1942 | HQ: MONTREAL | PRESIDENT AND CEO: ÉRIC MARTEL | INFO: BOMBARDIER.COM

A standalone business jet manufacturer since 2021, Bombardier makes and supports Challengers and Globals, spanning the super-midsize to ultra-long-range jet categories. The first member of its ultra-long-range Global family, the Global Express, flew in 1996. The super-midsize Challenger 300 first flew in 2001 and entered service in 2004. In 2018, the ultra-long-range Global 7500 was certified, and the faster and longer-range Global 8000 entered service in December 2025.

CIRRUS

FOUNDED: 1984 | HQ: DULUTH, MINNESOTA | CEO: ZEAN NIELSEN | INFO: CIRRUSAIRCRAFT.COM

Cirrus manufactures the SR line of piston-powered, single-engine aircraft and the single-engine SF50 Vision Jet. The company is owned by the China Aviation Industries General Aircraft (CAIGA) division of state-owned AVIC. In 2024, Cirrus delivered its 10,000th aircraft, and the number of Vision Jets in customer hands has exceeded 700. All are equipped with the Cirrus Airframe Parachute System, and the recently introduced G3 Vision Jet adds seating for six adults and ATC datalink communications.

DAHER AIRCRAFT

FOUNDED: 1863 | HQ: PARIS-ORLY, FRANCE | CEO: NICOLAS CHABBERT | INFO: DAHER.COM

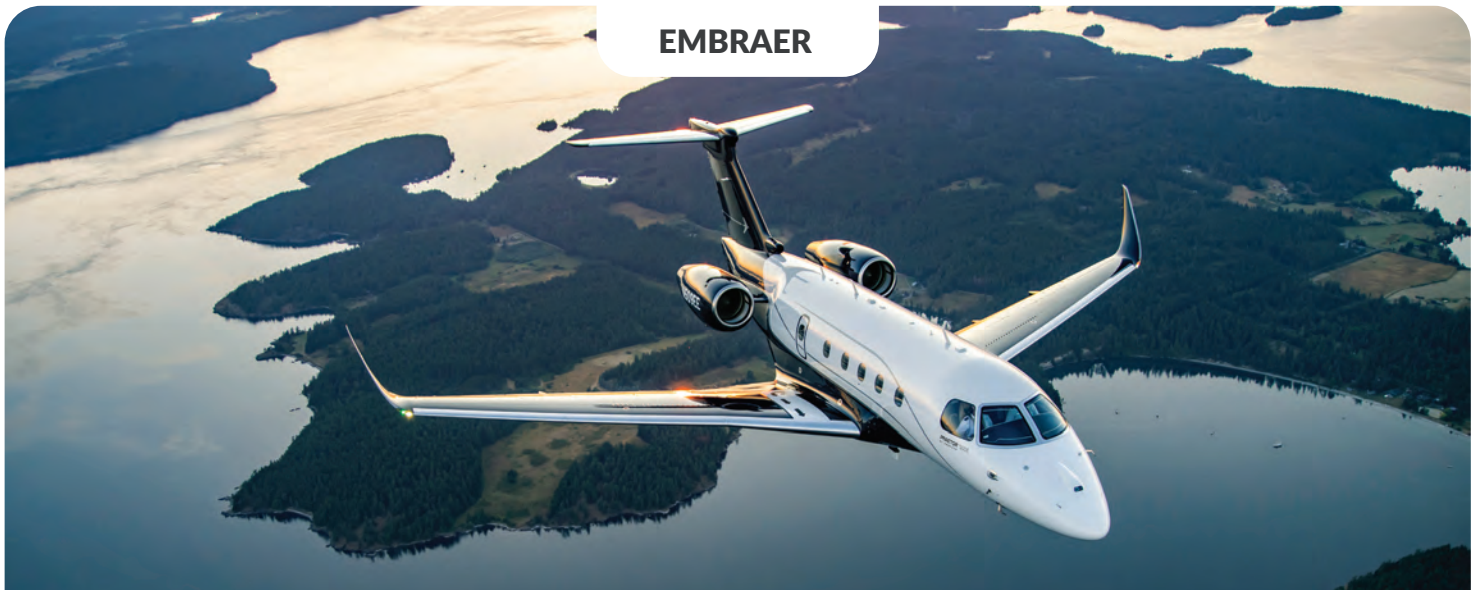
Daher is a diversified aerospace manufacturing and logistics and supply-chain-services company whose aviation roots date to 1911 with the founding of Morane-Saulnier. It produces the Kodiak 100 and 900 and TBM single-engine turboprops and manufactures components for other airframers. To meet growing demand for its Kodiaks and TBMs, Daher is opening production lines at its Stuart, Florida manufacturing facility. This will supplement Kodiak manufacturing in Sandpoint, Idaho, and TBM production in Tarbes, France.

DASSAULT

FOUNDED: 1929 | HQ: PARIS | PRESIDENT AND CEO: ÉRIC TRAPPIER | INFO: DASSAULT-AVIATION.COM

Dassault has a rich history of military and civil aircraft production. The Falcon 50 trijet was certified in 1979 followed by the 900-series trijet entering service in 1986, then the Falcon 2000 midsize twinjet in 1995. The ultra-long-range Falcon 7X trijet, the first fly-by-wire business jet, entered service in 2007, followed by the longer-range 8X in 2016. The twin-engine Falcon 6X entered service in 2023, and the company's new flagship, the large-cabin, ultra-long-range Falcon 10X twinjet, should begin deliveries in 2029.

EMBRAER



FOUNDED: 1969 | HQ: SÃO JOSÉ DOS CAMPOS, BRAZIL | EEJ PRESIDENT AND CEO: MICHAEL AMALFITANO | INFO: EMBRAER.COM

Embraer Executive Jets (EEJ) produces light to super-midsize twinjets. Established in 2005, it launched the Phenom 100 and Phenom 300 jets, with deliveries beginning in 2008–2009. It brought fly-by-wire to midsize jets with the Legacy 450 and 500, entering service in the mid-2010s. Embraer rebranded these as the Praetor 500 and 600 in 2018, and discontinued the large-cabin Legacy 650 and Lineage 1000 in 2020. Current aircraft include the Phenom 100EX and 300E; midsize Praetor 500; and super-midsize Praetor 600.

GULFSTREAM

FOUNDED: 1958 | HQ: SAVANNAH, GEORGIA | PRESIDENT: MARK BURNS | INFO: GULFSTREAM.COM

A General Dynamics company since 1999, Gulfstream Aerospace brought the GIII and GIV to market in the 1980s. The 1990s brought Gulfstream's first sales contract with NetJets and the debut of the GV. In the 2000s, Gulfstream bought Galaxy Aerospace, developing its midsize jets into the G100/G150 and G200/G280. The product line now includes the super-midsize G280, G500, G600, G700, and G800. The next members will be the G300 upgrade of the super-midsize G280 and the large-cabin G400, which is expected to enter service in 2026.

HONDA AIRCRAFT

FOUNDED: 2006 | HQ: GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA | PRESIDENT AND CEO: HIDETO YAMASAKI | INFO: HONDAJET.COM

The HondaJet was first delivered in 2015, and the current iteration is the HondaJet Elite II. The twinjet features a patented over-the-wing engine mount design. In 2021, Honda Aircraft unveiled a concept for its next aircraft, the Concept 2600, a larger light jet with a transcontinental range of 2,625 nm and a midsize-jet cabin that seats up to 11 passengers. Now called the Echelon, its performance goals include a maximum cruise speed of 450 knots and a maximum altitude of 47,000 feet.

LEONARDO

FOUNDED: 1948 | HQ: ROME | CEO: LORENZO MARIANI | INFO: LEONARDO.COM

Leonardo manufactures a wide variety of rotorcraft and airplanes for civil and military applications. Agusta represented the rotorcraft branch, which began developing and manufacturing helicopters in 1952. The A109 first flew in 1971 and entered service in 1976. A lightweight, twin-engine utility helicopter, it has proven to be the company's bestseller and is still manufactured today, along with the AW119Kx, AW139, AW169, AW189, and AW101. Development of the AW609 tiltrotor aircraft continues, as does that for its AW09 light single helicopter.

MD HELICOPTERS

FOUNDED: 1955 | HQ: MESA, ARIZONA | PRESIDENT: RYAN WEEKS | INFO: MDHELICOPTERS.COM

MD Helicopters traces its roots to 1955 when Hughes Tool's aircraft division began developing light helicopters. After a series of mergers and divestments, MD eventually became an independent company in 2005. MD Helicopters emerged from bankruptcy in 2022, and it continues to support its fleet with parts and an authorized service center network, and recently introduced the six-bladed MD 564.

PIAGGIO AEROSPACE

FOUNDED: 1884 | HQ: VILLANOVA D'ALBENGA, ITALY | PRESIDENT AND CEO: CRISTIAN TONINELLI | INFO: PIAGGIOAEROSPACE.IT

After entering administrative restructuring in December 2018, Piaggio Aerospace is now under new ownership by Turkish defense company Baykar. The company has restarted production of the P.180 Avanti Evo version of the unique twin-engine, three-lifting surface turboprop. Capable of flying more than 400 knots cruise speed, the spacious P.180 can fly 1,300 nm and as high as 41,000 feet, much higher than other more traditional turboprops.

PILATUS AIRCRAFT

FOUNDED: 1939 | HQ: STANS, SWITZERLAND | CEO: MARKUS BUCHER | INFO: PILATUS-AIRCRAFT.COM

Pilatus Aircraft's PC-12 single-engine business and utility turboprop entered service in 1994 and it has since delivered more than 2,200. The newest iteration, the PC-12 Pro, features Garmin avionics, an autothrottle, and Autoland technology. In 2018, the company began deliveries of the twin-engine PC-24 Super Versatile Jet, which can take off and land on unimproved, rough airfields and haul outsized cargo, thanks to an oversized rear cargo door and flexible cabin layout. The PC-24 can fly 2,000 nm and at cruise speeds up to 440 knots.

PIPER AIRCRAFT

FOUNDED: 1927 | HQ: VERO BEACH, FLORIDA | PRESIDENT AND CEO: JOHN CALCAGNO | INFO: PIPER.COM

Piper Aircraft builds a full line of piston and turboprop single and twin-engine aircraft. Piston models include the single-engine Pilot 100i, Archer LX, diesel-powered DLX, and pressurized M350, along with the twin-engine Seminole and Seneca. Piper also builds two turboprop singles based on the M350 fuselage, the M500 and M700 Fury. The six-seat M700 cruises at 301 knots and is equipped with the Garmin emergency Autoland system, which can automatically land the aircraft in the event of pilot incapacitation.

SIKORSKY

FOUNDED: 1923 | HQ: STRATFORD, CONNECTICUT | V-P AND GM: RICHARD BENTON | INFO: LOCKHEEDMARTIN.COM

Lockheed Martin acquired Sikorsky for $9 billion in 2015. Production of its civil models, the S-76D medium twin and the S-92A heavy twin, has languished due to resourcing priorities, U.S. regulatory changes, and market forces. Meanwhile, Sikorsky has spent $100 million to develop the Phase IV gearbox for the S-92A, which features an auxiliary lubrication system. The company has also engineered other improvements to the S-92A, such as longer maintenance intervals and a gearbox housing life extension.

TEXTRON AVIATION

FOUNDED: 2014 | HQ: WICHITA, KANSAS | PRESIDENT AND CEO: BRIAN ROHLOFF | INFO: TXTAV.COM

Textron Aviation was created in 2014 when Cessna parent Textron acquired Beechcraft and Hawker. Cessna's first business jet, the Citation I (Cessna 500), flew in 1969, and a decade later Citations were the world's bestselling business jets. Cessna sells six jet models, ranging from the small-cabin Citation M2 to the super-midsize Citation Longitude, with the latest the Citation Ascend upgrade of the XLS Gen2. Beechcraft's twin-engine King Air 260 and 360 turboprops will soon be joined by the Cessna Denali single-engine turboprop.

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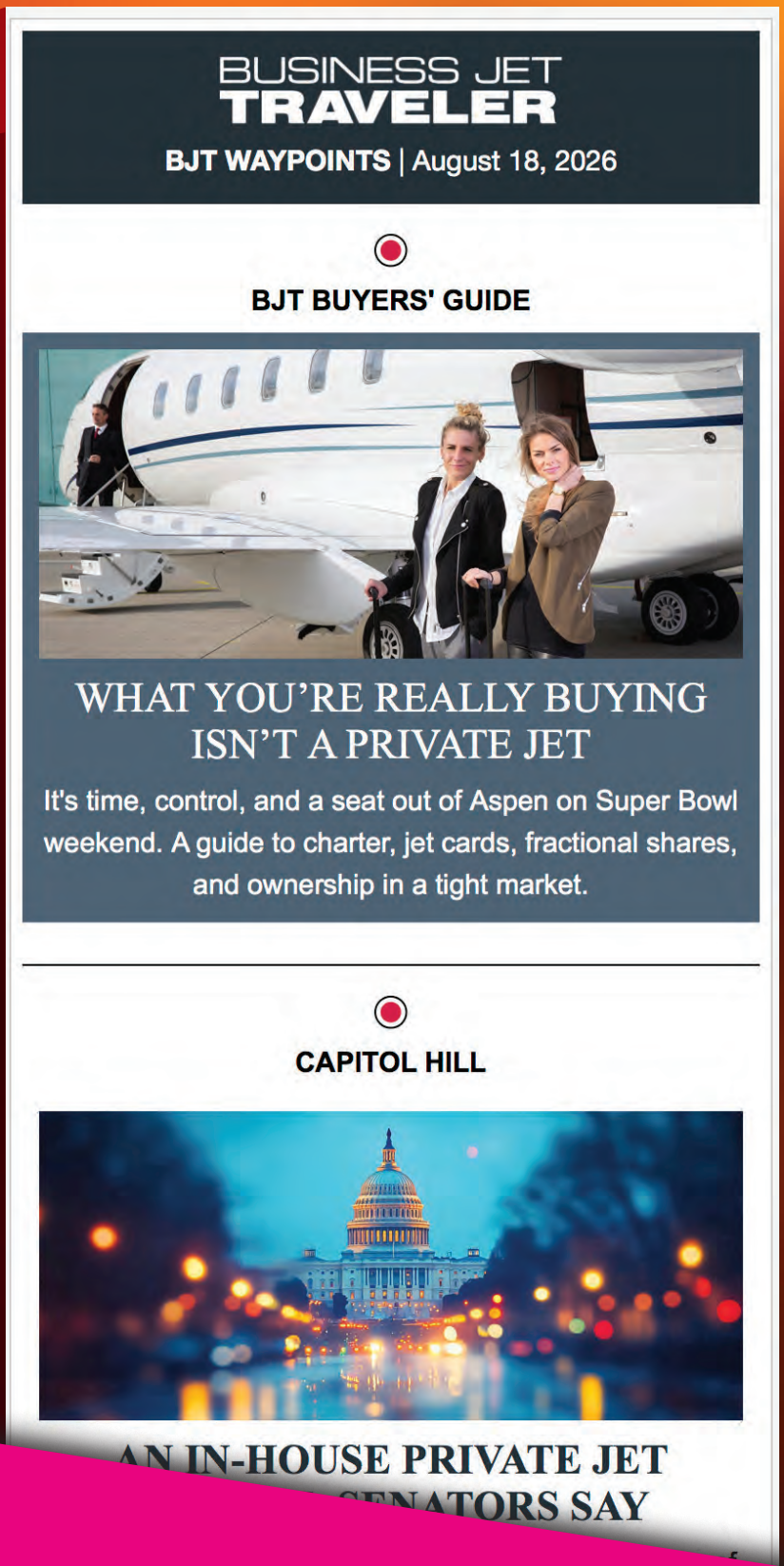

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