

New Asian Sky Group report looks into corporate airliner market

By Alud Davies
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Asian Sky Group (ASG) has released a new report looking into the corporate airliner market.

Corporate airliners are based on regular airline aircraft but, rather than having a regular airline interior, they are outfitted to have a VIP interior.

Although people have been buying old airliners and converting them for many years, manufacturers only began offering brand new versions of converted airliners in the late 1990s.

The first of these was the original Boeing BBJ. Based on the Boeing 737-700 series airliner. Rather than fitting standard airline seats, the aircraft was flown to a completion centre once it was airworthy, where it would have its corporate interior fitted. Boeing later expanded the BBJ range, which now includes aircraft based on all of the 737 models as well as the other aircraft that Boeing builds.

Shortly after Boeing introduced the original BBJ, Airbus introduced its own corporate airliner. Called the ACJ (Airbus Corporate Jet), the first model took the standard Airbus A319 airliner and converted it to corporate use. Much like with Boeing, Airbus later expanded the ACJ range to include all its in-production models.

According to the ASG report the Boeing BBJ models are the most popular in service, with 135 aircraft in service. Airbus, with its ACJ line has 70 in service.

As the first aircraft to enter service, the BBJ had several years' more deliveries than the ACJ. But production rates of both aircraft are relatively low, with peak production of the BBJ reaching 13 aircraft in 2006.

ASG says that although the ACJ and BBJ series of aircraft are the most popular, other manufacturers have followed suit and have begun offering corporate airliners too.

These include Bombardier, which offers a corporate-configured version of its CRJ series of airliners, Embraer with the Lineage 1000E derived from its E190 commuter aircraft and Sukhoi with its corporate-configured SuperJet.

Bombardier has 71 of its Challenger 850 aircraft in service, Embraer has 29 Lineage 1000s and Sukhoi has just a handful of SuperJets.

Of the 135 Boeing BBJ aircraft currently in service, ASG says that the majority are operated in the US, both by government agencies and private owners. Smaller BBJ fleets are also in evidence in Greater China – where in 2016 all four BBJs transacted on the secondary market were sold – as well as the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

The Middle East has always been considered as a large-cabin market. As well as a large number of Boeing BBJs, the region is also home to a large number of Airbus ACJs. The region has the second highest number of ACJs in operation with 14 aircraft, whilst Europe has the most with 33.

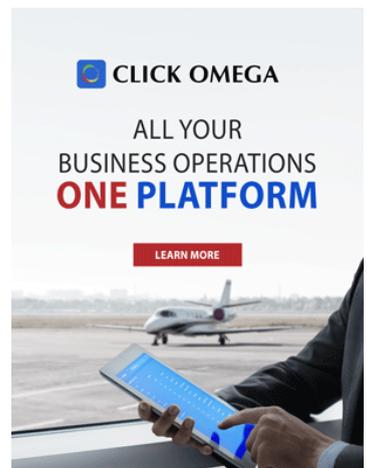
For the Challenger 850, ASG says that these are primarily used by Chinese governmental entities, as well as operators in the US and Russia. The ASG data includes those aircraft originally built as CRJ200s and put into regular airline service, but later taken out of service and reconfigured. The numbers for China are likely to be for the slightly larger Challenger 870 aircraft, based on the CRJ700 series aircraft.

The largest concentration of Lineage 1000s can be found in Asia, where nine of the 27 aircraft with confirmed regions of operation can be found. North America follows closely behind with eight aircraft, and four aircraft in each of the Middle East and Latin America & the Caribbean.

The ASG report also looks at pre-owned inventory levels which, the company says, have been steadily increasing since September 2016, especially for the ACJ and BBJ models. The company says that the typical percentage of aircraft for

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One of the selling points of corporate airliners is the level of customisation that can be undertaken. Although most aircraft stick to a traditional configuration, there are aircraft that have been designed with the owner's specific tastes in mind. This can, depending on how the aircraft has been configured, count against an aircraft when it is put up for sale. It is also notable that the number of potential customers for a corporate airliner, largely due to their size, is significantly lower than those for a purpose-built business jet. With ACJs and BBJs soon to be replaced by the respective neo and MAX aircraft, it is likely that owners of the original models have placed orders for newer aircraft, putting their current aircraft up for sale.



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