EXECUJET SET FOR EXPANSION IN DUBAI AND JEDDAH

News / Business aviation

ExecuJet Middle East this month marks its 16th anniversary with plans to further expand its presence here in Dubai. The company, which is part of the Swiss-based ExecuJet Aviation group, also is announcing plans to expand its operations in Saudi Arabia with a new FBO in **Jeddah.**

With a main base at **Dubai** International Airport, for the past two years ExecuJet has also operated a temporary base at Dubai World Central, or Dubai South as the massive new airport has been rebranded. It has now secured land for a permanent facility and hopes to start construction soon with a view to opening during the first quarter of 2017. In the meantime, it may opt to take up another temporary tenancy in the airport's general aviation terminal starting next year.

"We would love to keep both bases [i.e Dubai International and Dubai South], but it has been made clear [by the Dubai authorities] that Dubai South is going to be the main long-term home for general aviation," ExecuJet Middle East vice president Mike Berry told **AIN**. That said, with some low-cost carriers such as FlyDubai moving operations to Dubai South, this could temporarily relieve some capacity pressure at Dubai International.

For the past 10 years, MRO has been the main focus of ExecuJet Middle East's business plan. The Part 145-approved operation is a Bombardier authorized service facility, with the Canadian airframer having awarded it the Best Overall Maintenance Facility honor for the past two years and the Best International Maintenance Facility award for five consecutive years. ExecuJet also specializes in supporting Embraer and Hawker aircraft.

In addition to U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and European Aviation Safety Agency

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certificates, the facility holds approvals from 20 other national aviation authorities. In September, ExecuJet completed the FAA's foreign repair station approval process for the Dubai base. This includes the ability to conduct heavy base maintenance on N-registered aircraft, as well as non-destructive inspections and the right to perform work away from its Dubai location.

"We've grown tremendously," commented Berry. "The ExecuJet entity in the Middle East began in 1999 with just a couple of managed aircraft, but it now employs over 345 people and runs state-of-the-art MRO and FBO facilities at Dubai International Airport and Dubai South. We've also expanded our FBO network into Riyadh [Saudi Arabia] and Istanbul [Turkey], making a total of four in the region."

The planned new FBO in Jeddah will be established with its existing Saudi partner NAS. In December, their joint operation in the capital Riyadh will relocate to the royal terminal of King Khalid International Airport from its current location in the general aviation terminal.

According to Berry, traffic levels in Saudi Arabia have improved in recent months, inspiring the company's expansion plans. Across the wider Middle East region, ExecuJet has seen relatively flat flight activity levels. "Overall, activity is about the same as it was last year, but the downside is that this level is about 10 percent lower than what it was two years ago," said Berry. "Overall, the market is still down. Unrest in parts of the region is a factor, and so is the low oil price."

ExecuJet's aircraft management business has enjoyed some growth of late, with three new aircraft joining the fleet this year and two more to come by the end of December. Out of a total fleet of 22 jets, five are currently available for charter flights.

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