

ATTENTION: ONLINE FRAUD INCREASING IN PRIVATE JET CHARTER MARKET

News / Business aviation



The Air Charter Association and the European Business Aviation Association is issuing a warning to the business aviation sector regarding an increase in online fraud, as the charter market opens up to new and returning users.

The two industry bodies report that fraudulent companies use pages with images and text stolen from real websites, offering aircraft using names, registrations and contract templates from real companies to get customers to part with their money.

Dave Edwards, CEO of The ACA, says: “COVID-19 has changed the face of air travel, with commercial airlines forced to cut back services and raise prices. In response, the private jet charter industry has provided a lifeline to organisations, businesses and individuals who have needed to travel for emergencies, medical and humanitarian reasons, or for vital business missions. Alongside this rise in private jet charter, there has been an increase in attempts by fraudsters to steal money from unsuspecting travellers and criminals trying to enter the chain. We have seen examples of fraudsters creating fake websites pretending to be private jet providers to ‘sell’ their services. They are paying significant amounts of money to get high Google Ad search engine ratings and funnel unsuspected customers to these fake websites.”

Robert Baltus, EBAA Chief Operations Officer added: “Our advice for operators, brokers and end users is to be vigilant. Don’t simply book a private jet charter flight without doing any research on the business you’re working with and making sure it is legitimate. Verify bank details before making payment transfers and, above all, listen to your instincts and check with an independent source such as EBAA or The ACA. If it feels wrong, it invariably is. Online fraud is unfortunately here to stay. The basic lessons people apply to any online transaction should also be applied to booking a business jet flight online. It is important to speak to your broker and let them explain to you who they are and what the best option is for you. Make sure you get references for your broker if you have not dealt with them before.”

Five tips from The ACA and EBAA on how to recognise a scam website:

1. Do regular searches on Google for “private flight prices” or similar;
2. If you find strange or new names in the Google Ad results have a closer look at that page;
3. Check there is a phone number and that it works;
4. Check that the details make sense;
5. Use your experience and gut feeling.

What to do if you think you have spotted a scam website:

- Report the site: https://support.google.com/google-ads/contact/vio_other_aw_policy;
- If any details or names of established companies are used, make them aware so they can take action;
- Inform The ACA and/or EBAA about the suspected site.

What to do if you or someone you know may be a victim of a scam:

- Tell the victim to file charges with their local law enforcement agency;
- Please inform The ACA: info@theaircharterassociation.aero or EBAA communications@ebaa.org

What charter brokers and operators can do:

- Make sure that your customers are aware in newsletters and direct communications of these scams, and encourage them to work with established and credible organisations.



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