



HENDELL AVIATION AND FLY7 'SET' ON EUROPEAN EXPANSION

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Buoyed by EASA's approval to allow single-engine turboprops to fly commercially in IFR conditions and at night, two leading Pilatus PC-12 operators, Hendell Aviation of Finland and Fly7 of Switzerland, are at EBACE, Geneva this week to share their experience with operators and meet with European airports.

Top of the agenda is a potential UK base, which Hendell Aviation has identified as ripe for commercial operations, within the next six months. The UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has no issue with the plans, according to Hendell Chairman Matti Auterinen.

“Our aim is to create a bridge between Switzerland, France and the UK,” he said, noting this new EASA ruling is the passport to broadening its reach. “Considering Finland has a population of just five million people opportunities are somewhat limited in our home market,” he asserts. Matti combines his role at Hendell with flying the Airbus A350 for Finnair, but creating a new industry with single engine turboprops is his great passion.

Originally signing an exclusive agreement to work together in 2015, Hendell Aviation and Fly7 are now doing more business together. Fly7’s CEO Yves Roch and Hendell’s Matti first met in Lausanne when Matti undertook type rating and ground course training on the PC-12. From that point on, they agreed to look for opportunities to pool resources to offer management and operations expertise to PC-12 owners. Since last year, Hendell’s CEO Mikael Lees, who is also heavily engaged in EASA work, has been based in Lausanne and runs Operations and CAMO services for Fly7.

Fly7, as well as having a fleet of seven PC-12s, runs a large PC-12 training centre in Europe, accredited by the US FAA, EASA and JAA. It offers qualifications including CPL, ATPL and IR and all its instructors fly as commercial executive pilots. Hendell and Fly7 maintain that good flight training on single-engine aircraft is going to be the most crucial element of this sector’s success. as more and more aircraft come under commercial operator AOCs.

Matti Auterinen advocates the use of a shared simulator with visual flight displays for PC-12 pilots in Europe, because EASA demands that a single engine turboprop pilot must achieve more than the minimum number of hours a commercial pilot must attain (700 hours plus).

With over 10 years’ operating experience (started already 2004 while involved with humanitarian PC-12 operations in East Africa) on the type, Matti has become a recognized authority on PC-12 operating procedures and standards and as such has been able to help EASA define the challenges of SET-IMC and how best to overcome them. For example, in SETops IMC he will insist on two pilots. “Striving to adopt the best standards set for the airline industry is another key objective for us,” he says.

“We have studied the EASA CAT SET Ops and the document is very solid, enabling a good operating framework and terrific opportunities for operators,” Matti said, while underlining that the popularity of the PC-12 and suggesting interest in other SETops models is growing as a result.

More charter enquiries coming through

Hendell Aviation and Fly7 are seeing more enquiries about managing PC-12 aircraft as well as a general upswing in charter demand. “More charter brokers are getting familiar with these aircraft and the new destinations they are opening up.”

Fly7 CEO Yves Roch adds: “Consider the PC-12 can access 2,000 airfields in Europe that are not accessible by jet and at a much more affordable cost. We are confident that with the new EASA rulings we are going to see a new customer base of people who had previously dismissed private air charter because of the cost. We are doing all we can to educate people, especially the savvy entrepreneur millennials.”

“At Fly7 we are doing our bit by getting this message out loud and clear with an engaging interactive website and a strong pro-active social media presence.”

The heightened collaboration between these two operators was apparent last winter when Hendell

based a PC-12 in Saanen, Switzerland. This summer it is broadening its charter offerings from St Tropez, Lausanne and Geneva as well as other airports around Europe. The two companies also intend to further explore new markets in medevac, cargo and aerial survey in a nod to the PC-12's versatility. "Regional hospitals have a need to transport patients at a reasonable price when local helicopters and heavy jets are not so suitable," adds Yves Roch.

Hendell Aviation is also willing to assist other operators just as they helped GI Aviation with securing their GCAA AOC. Abu Dhabi Al Bateen Executive Airport-based GI Aviation is now operational and they look forward to introducing a second PC-12NG next month.

23 MAY 2017

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