



JET AGENT: WHY OPERATING HISTORY SHOULD INFLUENCE EVERY INTERNATIONAL AIRCRAFT ACQUISITION

News / Business aviation



Aircraft from emerging markets can represent excellent acquisition opportunities but understanding where and how an aircraft operates should shape the pre-purchase inspection and wider due diligence process.

By Anatoly Parkhomchuk, Founder and Managing Director at Jet Agent

The market for pre-owned business aircraft has become increasingly international. A buyer based in the United States might find the right aircraft in Latin America, while a European buyer may identify an attractive opportunity in the Middle East, Africa or Southeast Asia. Geography is much less of a barrier to an acquisition than it once was. This gives buyers more choice, but it also makes understanding an aircraft's history increasingly important.

Age, total time, cycles, maintenance status and asking price remain fundamental considerations. Yet two aircraft of the same model and vintage, with similar hours, can have very different histories. Where an aircraft has been based, how it has been operated, who has maintained it and

the quality of its records can all influence what a buyer should investigate.

For aircraft that have spent significant periods operating in emerging markets, these questions can become particularly relevant. This does not mean that an aircraft from one region is inherently better or worse than another. Instead, international acquisitions require buyers to understand the story behind the aircraft rather than relying exclusively on headline specifications.

Geography should create questions, not conclusions

There is a risk of judging an aircraft primarily according to where it has been based. An aircraft operating in Brazil, Mexico, the Middle East, Africa or Southeast Asia should not automatically be considered a higher-risk acquisition than one based in the United States or Western Europe.

A well-maintained aircraft with complete records can represent an excellent acquisition regardless of geography. Equally, an aircraft based throughout its life in a mature business aviation market can still have maintenance, documentation or condition issues.

The relevant question is what the aircraft's operating history tells the buyer to investigate.

Environmental conditions are one example. Aircraft that have spent considerable time in humid or coastal environments may require particular attention to corrosion. Operations in hot, dry and dusty conditions create different considerations. Exposure to extreme temperatures or extended periods of outdoor parking can also become relevant.

None of these factors automatically makes an aircraft undesirable. They provide context for due diligence and, importantly, for the pre-purchase inspection.

Understand how the aircraft was maintained

Where an aircraft has been maintained can be just as important as where it has flown.

Business aviation infrastructure varies considerably between countries, including within emerging markets. Some have sophisticated maintenance organisations and established support for major aircraft manufacturers. Other markets have more limited local capabilities, meaning aircraft may travel internationally for major inspections.

A buyer therefore needs to understand the maintenance ecosystem surrounding the individual aircraft. Who performed scheduled maintenance? Where were major inspections completed? Were repairs carried out by organisations familiar with the aircraft type? Were applicable airworthiness directives and other maintenance requirements properly incorporated and documented?

The answers can challenge assumptions based on geography. An aircraft may have been based in an emerging market but routinely flown to an established maintenance centre for significant inspections. Another may have operated in a mature market while receiving inconsistent maintenance or accumulating gaps in its records.

The aircraft itself should drive the assessment.

Records tell another part of the story

One of the most important elements of an international acquisition is establishing the quality and continuity of the aircraft's records.

Business aircraft can change owners, operators, registration jurisdictions and maintenance providers several times during their lives. Each transition creates another point at which documentation needs to remain complete and traceable.

Buyers should be able to understand the history of major components, inspections, modifications and repairs. Previous damage and subsequent repairs should also be properly documented.

Missing or inconsistent records do not necessarily mean that an aircraft cannot be acquired, but they can create additional work and potentially affect its value, financing, registration and eventual resale.

This can become particularly relevant when an aircraft has moved through several jurisdictions. Different regulatory and recordkeeping environments may make reconstructing its history more complicated.

Transparency is therefore valuable. A seller who clearly explains an aircraft's history and provides supporting documentation gives the buyer a much stronger basis for evaluating the asset.

The PPI should follow the aircraft's history

A pre-purchase inspection is one of the buyer's most important opportunities to verify what they are actually acquiring. However, a PPI should not be approached as an identical checklist for every aircraft.

The aircraft's history should help determine where additional attention is required.

If it has spent years operating in a humid coastal environment, inspectors may want to focus particularly on areas susceptible to corrosion. If it has operated extensively in desert conditions, exposure to dust and heat may influence inspection priorities. Previous repairs, modifications, periods of storage or repeated changes in registration can also justify additional investigation.

The objective is not to find reasons to reject an aircraft. It is to reduce uncertainty before a substantial financial commitment is made.

The choice of inspection facility matters as well. Buyers should seek a facility with experience on the specific aircraft type and sufficient independence to provide an objective assessment.

The scope should also be established before the inspection begins. Both parties need to understand what will be inspected, what happens if significant discrepancies are discovered and which findings the seller will be expected to address.

A thorough PPI may uncover issues that influence the purchase price, require corrective work or, occasionally, justify walking away from the transaction. Saving money on due diligence can become expensive if significant problems only emerge after closing.

Purchase price is only part of the equation

Searching internationally can expose buyers to aircraft that appear attractively priced compared with similar inventory in their home market. That can represent a genuine opportunity, but the

purchase price should never be viewed in isolation.

An international acquisition may involve positioning the aircraft to an appropriate inspection facility, correcting PPI discrepancies, resolving documentation issues and satisfying export, import and registration requirements. Taxes, customs considerations and professional costs may also apply depending on the transaction.

A seemingly inexpensive aircraft can therefore become less attractive once the complete acquisition is understood.

The opposite can also be true. An aircraft that initially appears more expensive may represent better value if it has strong maintenance status, complete documentation and fewer immediate requirements after closing.

The objective should be to understand the likely cost and risk of acquiring the aircraft, rather than simply finding the lowest asking price.

Transparency matters

International transactions depend heavily on trust, but trust should be supported by verification.

Previous damage, demanding operating environments or unusual maintenance events do not necessarily prevent an aircraft from being a good acquisition. Problems are more likely when relevant information is discovered late in the process.

The goal should not be to present an aircraft as having a perfect history. Instead, sellers should provide enough information for buyers and their advisers to understand that history and evaluate its significance.

That transparency also allows the PPI to be used more effectively. When inspectors understand what an aircraft has experienced, they can focus attention where it matters most.

Experience becomes more important as the search expands

As aircraft searches become more global, the role of an experienced acquisition broker extends beyond identifying available inventory and negotiating a purchase price.

From our experience at [Jet Agent](#), the growing internationalisation of the pre-owned market means buyers increasingly need to evaluate aircraft histories that span different operating environments, maintenance systems and regulatory jurisdictions.

The value of experience often lies in knowing which questions to ask and when an answer requires further investigation.

A broker familiar with international transactions can help interpret the aircraft's history, identify areas requiring additional attention and coordinate the maintenance, legal, tax and registration specialists involved in due diligence. Just as importantly, experience can help distinguish genuine risk from assumptions based primarily on geography.

An aircraft should not be rejected simply because it has operated in an emerging market. Equally, an attractive specification and competitive price should not prevent a buyer from asking difficult questions.

Business aircraft are increasingly global assets and buyers should be comfortable looking beyond familiar markets. The right aircraft may be thousands of miles away and may have spent its operational life in a very different environment.

That should not discourage an acquisition. It should encourage better due diligence.

Ultimately, what matters is the condition of the aircraft, the quality of its maintenance, the completeness of its records and the transparency surrounding its history.

For buyers, the question should extend beyond whether an aircraft has the right age, hours, range, cabin and price. They should also ask: Where has this aircraft been, and what does that history tell us to look at next?

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07 SEPTEMBER 2026

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