

# U.S. modification specialist extends its European reach

by Charles Alcock

Raisbeck Engineering (Booth No. 770) has appointed three new dealers in Europe this year in response to rising demand for its business aircraft modification packages. UK companies PremiAir Aircraft Engineering and FR Aviation, as well as Beechcraft Berlin Aviation in Germany, have joined the network of distributors since January.

The U.S. group will be looking to make further appointments on this side of the Atlantic soon after the EBACE show. Dealer development director Bobby Patton will be making visits to CAM Aviation in Denmark, Uni Air in France and both Ruag and Jet Aviation here in Switzerland.

According to Raisbeck COO Sam Jantzen, European sales for the first quarter of 2009 were substantially ahead of the same period a year ago. The company added several other new dealers in Europe last year and is starting to reap the return in terms of increased sales.

In Jantzen's view, Raisbeck's modifications for increasing performance and service life are the right products at the right time during a severe economic crisis when buying new aircraft is a less viable option for many in business aviation (especially since credit is so hard to secure these days). He argued that European customers, in particular, tend to have a very frugal and pragmatic attitude toward upgrading aircraft, rather than replacing them.

"We've decided not to participate in the recession," he quipped, explaining that

Europe's strong customer base for Hawker Beechcraft's King Air family of twin turboprops is showing strong interest in boosting the performance of their aircraft rather than replacing them with jets. He claimed that, in some cases, jet owners are mothballing their aircraft because market conditions make it difficult to sell them at an attractive price, and instead are flying in more economical turboprops such as King Airs.

"The King Air is not a posh, luxury aircraft," said Jantzen, alluding to recent public controversy about perceived corporate excess in the use of private jets. "It is a flexible workhorse and a utilitarian airplane. The fact is, a lot of people flying in company airplanes are doing trade jobs, and are not top management. [Raisbeck's products] are utilitarian modifications that increase speed and put fewer hours [of wear and tear] on the aircraft, and mean about eight percent less fuel burn."

Raisbeck is also seeing rising demand for modifications among emergency medical service operators. Jantzen told **EBACE Convention News** that the continued weakness of the U.S. dollar against the euro has helped the company's sales and that it expects to see further growth in European revenues this year despite the mounting difficulties in the continent's economies. He added that certification of Raisbeck's mods by international agencies, such as EASA, is increasing the resale value of the aircraft to which they are fitted.

At the same time, Raisbeck also is see-



**Raisbeck offers its ZR Lite modification for the Learjet 31, top, and the Learjet 35/36. The mod increases range of the Learjet 31 by 5 to 11 percent. On the 35/36 model, Raisbeck uses a "batwing," right, behind the trailing edges to increase range by 6 percent. The aft fuselage locker, above, has a maximum capacity of 300 pounds to give passengers more room to store their belongings.**



ing growing demand for its ZR Lite package to upgrade and extend the service life of older Bombardier Learjets. Jantzen claimed that the Learjet is the most economical to operate in its market segment.

Raisbeck's dealers are all trained and equipped to install the modification kits at their own facilities. It conducts training seminars four times a year at its headquarters near Seattle, Washington, and also makes frequent visits to European dealers and customers. "The work is done to the same standard by our dealers in Europe and is covered by the same warranties," Jantzen explained.

In January, both the European Aviation Safety Agency and the Brazilian authorities certified the 10,500-pound increase in gross weight that can be achieved for King Air C90/C90GTs through Raisbeck's EPIC modification. It also covers full noise certification.

The EPIC performance package includes the 93-inch Raisbeck/Hartzell Quiet Turbofan Propellers and dual aft-body strakes. It is available for all C90 series aircraft and will soon be available for the new C90GTi model, pending certification of that airplane's Pro Line 21 system with the Raisbeck/Hartzell Propellers. The

**Raisbeck's modifications to the King Air allow operators to squeeze as much performance as possible out of the turboprops. Clockwise: the ram-air recovery system is designed to deliver improved climb performance, while the quiet turbofan propellers provide a "virtually vibration-free operation." The Crown wing lockers provide 17 cu ft of additional stowage space.**

modification was recently installed on a 32-year-old aircraft that came off the production line in 1977.

The gross weight increase allows operators to add between 400 and 850 pounds of extra fuel and/or payload. It also allows them to get full use of Raisbeck's optional Crown wing lockers on the King Airs.

"We are enjoying the benefits from the Raisbeck EPIC and its new props," said U.S. C90 operator Ben Kester. "I noticed a difference in acceleration on takeoff immediately, even with its heavier payload. Climb and cruise are better too, especially at the higher altitudes. Landing distances are also shorter when using the props to decelerate. Perhaps the biggest benefit to our flight operation is the higher gross weight limit. Combined with the new higher zero fuel weight, it has allowed me to carry an additional passenger or another half hour of fuel on board that I would not have been able to otherwise."

Raisbeck is now working on certification of several other new modification packages. It expects to announce them at the next NBAA show, to be held in Orlando, Florida, in October.

Existing European dealers for Raisbeck include Air Alpha and Scandinavian Aircraft Technologies in Denmark, Bromma Air Maintenance in Sweden, Aero-Dienst and Beechcraft Sales and Service in Germany, and Gama Support Services, Hawker Beechcraft Services and MCA Aviation in the UK. □

