PART 1 | AIRCRAFT

The highest overall rating for jets again goes to Gulfstream. Mitsubishi takes the top spot among turboprops and Bell leads in the helicopter category.

by Matt Thurber

During the past few years as the dollar has weakened against non-U.S. currencies, sales of business jets, turboprops and helicopters outside the U.S. have burgeoned. Most aircraft manufacturers report that non-U.S. sales are greater than the traditional 30 to 40 percent of total sales number, and many are now selling more aircraft outside the U.S. than to U.S. customers.

For manufacturers, growing sales, both in the U.S. and abroad, present an immense challenge: how to support so many aircraft owners and operators and how to deliver support to operators with airplanes based in countries that have little or no general aviation infrastructure. Cessna, for example, recently sold its first jet in Kosovo. Where will that jet be serviced? Fortunately, distances in Europe are relatively short and that Citation owner will have plenty of nearby choices, but what about operators in India, Russia and China? Will manufacturers be able to provide the needed services cost-effectively and at levels of quality high enough to encourage repeat buying?

These are questions that manufacturers are already grappling with, and it's clear that they are not waiting for their backlogs to turn into deliveries before paving the way for product support all over the world. Manufacturers also aren't waiting for airplanes to enter service before figuring out how to support them. Most begin the after-sale service planning process well before the first piece of metal or composite fabric is cut on a new design. Upon launch of a new aircraft, every manufacturer already has a product support strategy in place, including new entrants such as Honda Aircraft, which imported Honda automotive luxury brand marketing leader Doug Dannier to manage HondaJet support.

Product support is a tricky business. Both the after-sale support and a customer is unlikely to be back for future purchases. The customer base is so varied that manufacturers have to offer many ways of interacting with service and support personnel and providers. A newly formed flight department operating a new Learjet, for example, has support needs completely different from those of the buyer of a well worn, decades-old Learjet 25, or a fleet operator.

Manufacturers that deliver hundreds of aircraft beyond the country of manufacture have to take into account customs delays when shipping parts to customers in other countries. Many have addressed this problem by building local parts warehouses around the world, but this adds more overhead to parts costs, a significant issue for aircraft owners and operators.

Business aircraft buyers all want as much availability as possible, otherwise what value is there in owning an aircraft? But they also want reasonable costs of operation, and manufacturers have to balance customer desires against the expense of delivering after-sale service. To that end, most expand their service capability by adding authorized service centers instead of building factory-owned service centers. Of course, this brings its own set of difficulties, especially how to create a consistent level of service between factory-owned and independent authorized service facilities.

Finally, manufacturers of aircraft face a unique conundrum: aircraft last a long time. Continues on page 36 Report continues on next page
## 2008 RATINGS

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### HOW THE SURVEY WAS ADMINISTERED

Alin's 2008 Product Support Survey offered 13,552 subscribers the opportunity to rate the service and support they receive from manufacturer support operations and factory-authorizated independent service centers. Readers were asked to rate their aircraft, engines and avionics in nine categories. On the one-to-ten scale, one is inadequate and 10 is excellent. To be listed in the results, a manufacturer had to garner at least 15 ratings; some aircraft types/makers no longer have enough aircraft flying to generate sufficient responses to make the survey statistically useful. The aircraft results are published in this issue, while the avionics report will be featured in September and October in The Product Support Survey was conceived by Alin editors and developed and administered by aerospace research firm Forecast International of Newtown, Conn.

The following are the nine rating categories, including explanations of the key points that survey participants were asked to consider when submitting their opinions:

- **Authorized Service Centers**—cost estimates vs. actual, on-time performance, scheduling ease, service experience.
- **Factory Service Centers**—same as above.
- **Parts Availability**—in stock vs. back order, shipping time.
- **Cost of Parts**—value for price paid.
- **AOG Response**—speed, accuracy, cost.
- **Warranty Fulfillment**—ease of paperwork, extent of coverage.
- **Technical Manuals**—ease of use, formats available, timeliness of updates.
- **Technical Reps**—response time, knowledge, effectiveness.
- **Overall Product Reliability**—how the product's overall reliability and quality stack up against the competition's.

Of the 13,552 subscribers invited to participate this year, 1,384 returned their surveys either by submitting information online or by filling out paper ballots. This is the third year that Alin and Forecast International have conducted this survey electronically, with participants inputting ratings via a Forecast International Website. Only 144 paper ballots were submitted for the 2008 Product Support Survey.

The return rate for the 2008 Product Support Survey was 10.28 percent, up slightly from last year's 10 percent, although the number of ratings for the aircraft segment did drop to 3,022 in 2008 compared to 3,623 in 2007.

As always, more people visited the survey Web site than completed the survey, and Alin always welcomes feedback about how the survey can be improved to make participants' task easier. According to comments submitted by participants, survey takers generally found the survey enjoyable and easy to complete and appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback about their product support experience. If the manufacturers need this, "wrote one senior maintenance technician, "Some don't like it, but the industry is better for it as it stives to improve. It is a rating by the customer; what better information on how they are doing can you get?"

Survey respondents also questioned whether the manufacturers pay attention to the results. At Alin, we receive a lot of feedback from manufacturers and are certain that they take the survey seriously. One director of maintenance, however, resents having allowed his name to be used with a comment that he made on a previous survey, writing this year, "The last time I was involved with a survey, the manufacturer was asked the same comment about the survey. I was told, "Let's just keep this survey going."

The switch to online surveying over the past three years has delivered outstanding results: saved tons of paper and made the survey and analysis process much more efficient. While the trend toward online surveying will continue, we might consider changing the survey to include feedback on the return to the good old days. I hate surveys," he wrote, "but there was no envelope so I endured."
and every owner expects service to be available as long as he owns the aircraft. Manufacturers have taken different approaches to this problem. Some, such as Mitsubishi, which built the last MU-2 turboprop in 1986, continue to support every airplane made and have pledged to do so until there are none left. Others are trying their best but face considerable challenges. For example, Piper Aircraft lost a lot of business used to make Cheyenne turboprop parts in hurricanes and floods, making product support of these planes that much more difficult and expensive. Bombardier offers its Classier service for older aircraft, with new fees for product support, which is one way for a manufacturer to ensure that support continues for aging aircrafts.

Top-rated Jet Manufacturers

This year’s lineup of jet manufacturer product support changed somewhat from last year, but is topped again by Gulfstream for both new (less than 10 years) and older models. This is Gulfstream’s sixth year with an overall average atop those lists. Cessna ranked second for its Citation support, and third was Dassault Falcon Jet. Last year the two companies ranked fourth and fifth, respectively.

Gulfstream received ratings above 8.00 in seven of nine categories; the nearest to that performance was Cessna, with four 8.00-plus in the new jets field. The seven top-rated areas for Gulfstream were factory service centers, parts availability, AOG response, warranty fulfillment, technical manuals, technical reps and overall aircraft reliability. Gulfstream’s lowest rankings were for cost of parts and authorized service centers. Parts availability, AOG response, warranty fulfillment and overall aircraft reliability received the highest rankings from Citation operators.

This year, Embraer dropped behind Bombardier’s Challenger and Learjet, where Hawker Beechcraft’s smaller jets (Premier IIA, Diamond, Beechjet 400A, Hawker 400XP) then the midsize Hawkers. Bombardier’s Challenger and Learjet landed in 7th and 8th place, followed by Embraer and Bombardier’s long-range Globals.

In the overall average for 2008, Gulfstream was the only jet manufacturer to earn a rating above 8.00 (8.22). The rest of the rankings occupied a range from 6.56 (Bombardier Global) to 7.88 (Cessna Citation). The biggest change percentage-wise belonged to Bombardier’s Learjet support, which leaped 11.27 percent over last year to 6.93. Contributing to Learjet’s big leap this year were improved ratings for factory service centers, parts availability, cost of parts, AOG response, technical information, tech reps and overall aircraft reliability.

On the negative side, the largest drop was for Hawker Beechcraft’s lighter jets, down 5.66 percent to 7.36. Operators clearly do not like Hawker Beechcraft’s cost of parts for these jets, and the low 5.79 rating down from last year’s 6.35 dropped down what otherwise would have been a higher overall average.

Newer Turboprops

The ratings in this category have not changed, and Pilatus and PC-12 topped the 2008 survey, followed closely by Hawker Beechcraft’s King Air support. Both Pilatus and Hawker Beechcraft’s overall averages dropped slightly, but not significantly, with Pilatus down to 7.37.

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AIN asked manufacturers to detail changes and improvements to their product support efforts during the past year. While AIN made repeated efforts to gather input from all of the manufacturers whose products are covered by this year’s Product Support Survey, some did not provide any information. AgustaWestland, Boeing and MD Helicopters did not respond this year.

Bell Helicopter

- All new Bell will come with Skybooks maintenance-tracking software free during warranty period.
- Improved same-day turn rates to 82 percent from 60 percent and AOG rate to 36 percent from 85 percent using new warehouse management tools.
- Implemented Bell achievement rating system to help ensure consistency of service among service centers.

Bombardier

- Added 14 authorized service centers to worldwide network.
- Implemented mobile repair party teams at Bombardier-owned service centers.
- Developed standardized independent survey to evaluate service levels at Bombardier-owned facilities and authorized service facilities.

Cessna Aircraft

- Established centrally managed inventory system for Cessna-owned Citation service centers that makes parts available and accessible by all facilities.
- Implemented customer-first initiative in northern American service centers, where customers have a point person for all service issues and to assist with local arrangements such as hotels, rental cars and so on.
- Developed Citation classic support program, focusing on maintenance issues on out-of-production aircraft.

Dassault Falcon Jet

- Harmonizing customer support in eastern and western hemispheres by creating new worldwide organization lead by Jacques Chavet, new senior VP for worldwide customer service.
- Three centers in Tel Aviv, M.J.; Buses, Lebanon; and St. Cloud, France working together to provide around-the-clock assistance worldwide.
- Testing system to download maintenance data from aircraft via Internet for quick troubleshooting to help customers get back in the air faster.

Embraer

- Expanded to three factory-owned and 26 authorized service centers, adding four factory-owned and 12 authorized centers this year.
- Reduced Legacy 600 maintenance costs by 18 percent with new maintenance planning guide.
- Reduced 550-percent growth in skilled personnel in executive jet support organization.

Eurocopter

- Improved parts tracking, especially rotor blade quotes and technical reports.
- Created customer service center to support operators in Europe and improve responsiveness to customers in the Americas.
- Improved spare parts distribution system with new forecasting, key logistics manager as focal point for customer and logistics field reps to assist customers.

Gulfstream Aerospace

- First phase of new factory-owned service center opened in Savannah, Ga. Nearby 550 new technicians in past 18 months.
- Expanded authorized service center partnerships around the world.
- PlaneConnect top-of-the-line database maintenance data collection system is helping make “incredible savings.” Work on next-gen PlaneConnect is under way.

Hawker Beechcraft

- Divested FDQ division to focus on maintenance services, reliability and customer satisfaction.
- Enrolled 500th airplane in Support Plus program and continued adding improvements in warranty and support programs.
- Continued investments in Web delivery of technical publications and Rapid parts distribution system.

Pilatus Aircraft

- Authorized service centers can now access all Web-based maintenance manuals free of charge.
- Implemented E-publications to provide information on upgrades, special programs and technical issues to service centers.

Piper Aircraft

- Implemented enhanced delivery program, where every customer meets a member of the customer service department during delivery at the Vero Beach, Fla. facility or during training at SimCom in Orlando.
- Re-instituted monthly stocking order, which moves more parts to Piper dealers and reduces customer count times.
- Quarterly contact system added as follow-up to enhanced delivery.

Sabreliner

- Engaged outside firm to conduct regular customer satisfaction surveys.
- Added parts manufacturing capability, which helps reduce prices and increase quality.
- Studying two major upgrades at request of Sabreliner’s owner/operators, one cockpit-related and the other engine-related.

Sikorsky

- Re-branded entire aftermarket organization as Sikorsky Aerospace Services and further solidified its mission to provide tip-to-tail service for aircraft owners and operators worldwide.
- Conducted comprehensive end-to-end customer survey to determine what customers want and how to meet all of those needs.
- Committed to trained field service representatives in the areas of most need. The training with respect to the new equipment being delivered to more than 30 military and commercial customers located at 63 different sites around the world.
from 7.47 last year and Hawker Beechcraft to 7.23 from 7.28. The PC-12’s highest score was in the overall aircraft reliability category, and operators also ranked Pilatus high in the technical reps category and relatively high in cost of parts.

AIN didn’t receive enough responses to include two popular turboprop manufacturers, Piper with its single-engine Meridian and EADS Socata’s TBM series. Single-engine turboprops are one of the most efficient ways to fly, and sales numbers reflect buyers’ appreciation of their airplanes’ utility. However, these owners/operators either chose not to fill out AIN’s product support survey or did not receive the invitation.

**Older Jets**

Gulfstream’s support for its older jets continues to rate highly with AIN readers. The GIV and GV slipped slightly to 8.15 from an 8.19 overall average, and the G280 added 8.20, provided main by General Dynamics Aviation Services in the U.S., climbed this year to 7.71 from 7.64 last year. According to survey participants, overall reliability is Gulfstream’s strongest suit for the GIV/V, with technical reps, technical manuals, warranty fulfillment, AOG response and parts availability the high points. For the G280/300, AOG response, technical manuals, technical reps and overall aircraft reliability all received ratings of 8.00.

The big jump this year was Sabreliner’s move to third place; the company continues to provide extraordinarily strong support for a fleet of jets that went out of production in 1981. Sabreliner’s overall average grew 22.95 percent in the older jets field to 7.62, up from 6.19 in 2007, All Sabreliner categories were rated higher this year than last year, with most up more than 1.60 but authorized service centers up almost 3.00.

Hawker Beechcraft’s two jet categories in the old jet field both claimed higher overall ratings this year, with the lighter jets gaining 2.76 percent and midsize Hawkers up 12.11 percent. The two categories were in sixth and seventh place, behind Dassault Falcon Jet in fifth. Areas of strength for the Hawkers were overall aircraft reliability, technical reps, technical manuals and factory support centers. Dassault rated much higher in overall aircraft reliability and scored well in the other categories with the exception of cost of parts.

Bombardier’s Learjet support also enjoyed a ratings uptick, with an overall average of 5.61, up 8.16 percent from last year, but still in second-to-last place in the older jet field. IAI’s support for its older jets, including the Westwind (which General Dynamics Aviation Services no longer supports), filled the last position.

**Older Turboprops**

The older turboprops are a tough bunch because so many of them have been out of production for such a long time. Cessna Conquests didn’t receive enough ratings to qualify for listing in this year’s survey, and Piper’s Cheyenne received just enough to be listed.

Owners and operators of Mitsubishi MU-2s responded enthusiastically this year and boosted the Japanese company’s support to the 9.17 level, a high rating, especially for an out-of-production airplane. The MU-2 received 9.00-plus ratings in seven categories, with technical manuals and cost of parts the only categories in the 8.00 range but still quite high, especially the cost of parts category as compared to other manufacturers. Clearly Mitsubishi’s strategy of continuing to provide full support to the remaining MU-2 fleet is keeping owners happy. The support that Mitsubishi provides consists not only of a Mitsubishi Heavy Industries America-owned service center and a strong network of authorized support centers, but also pilot and maintenance training, parts supply, ongoing product improvements, biennial safety seminars and a recently enacted special FAR for mandatory flight training (which Mitsubishi fully supported).

At the other end of the spectrum are Piper’s Cheyenne turboprops, not built since 1985. The Cheyenne overall rating climbed this year to 5.96, up from last year’s 5.78. The highest rating given to the Cheyenne was for overall aircraft reliability, 7.82. Piper doesn’t own any factory service centers for the Cheyenne and lost many of its Cheyenne tooling fixtures in hurricanes that affected its Florida factories, so parts support for these older turboprops is a challenge.

Piper’s approach to the Cheyenne fleet seems to reflect the low ratings for Cheyenne support; we could find no reference to Cheyenne support on Piper’s Web site, and a spokesperson told AIN, “Piper produced more than 1,000 Cheyennes between 1974 and 1985. In some cases, those aircraft are over 30 years old. We both know the stories related to both lost and destroyed tooling, but the reality is how long are we expected to support aircraft from a parts standpoint?” Cheyenne technical publications are available from Piper’s publications supplier, Ansport.

**Helicopters**

The rankings for the top three helicopter manufacturers are the same this year, with Bell Helicopter again in first place, followed by MD Helicopters and Sikorsky in second and third places, respectively. Only two helicopter manufacturers saw overall ratings increases, MD Helicopters, which climbed 1.26 percent to 6.78 from 6.97, and AgustaWestland, to 6.13 from 5.84. Bell dropped 5.05 percent, Sikorsky 2.21 percent and Eurocopter, moving to last place in a swap with AgustaWestland, slid the most at 5.9 percent.

In the 2008 survey, Bell improved in factory service centers and cost of parts but dropped in all other categories, most significantly overall aircraft reliability, warranty fulfillment and AOG response time.

Compared with last year, MD Helicopters saw big gains in parts availability and AOG response and smaller improvements in cost of parts, technical reps and overall aircraft reliability. Areas that declined

The following OEMs did not garner the required 15 responses to be included:

- Airbus Helicopters
- AgustaWestland
- Bell Helicopter
- Eurocopter
- Sikorsky
- Bell Helicopter
- Eurocopter

The results of the avionics and engines surveys will be published in AIN’s September and October issues, respectively.

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In Their Own Words

AIN readers who responded to the AIN 2008 Product Support Survey took advantage of the opportunity to express their opinions about the products they fly and maintain, the manufacturers they work with and the service organizations that take care of their aircraft. The aircraft operated by the respondents range from corporate airplanes and helicopters, including many from the early days of business aviation. Respondents from all over the world underscore the rapid growth of business aviation, and in recognition of the care that participants in this industry must take with their careers, survey takers were offered the opportunity to give permission for their name and/or company name to be used with their comments. AIN will not reveal company names or respondent names where anonymity was requested.

In analyzing the comments, we selected those that offer information that manufacturers, service providers and readers might find informative and useful. Cost of parts, for example, is a perennial low ranking for every manufacturer, and manufacturers do take these and other comments seriously. We have made every attempt to present a balanced view with the comments in the hope that where manufacturers deserve praise, they are recognized, and where they could learn from customer feedback, they are offered information that can help them improve their products and services.

AUTHORIZED SERVICE CENTERS

Bell Helicopter operators are generally happy with the quality of non-factory-owned service centers, although chief pilot Enrique Bougeois complained that his company never received a refund for unused time on TT straps. “Three times a [request for] refund has been submitted with no answer,” he wrote. One operator commented, “Bell treats its service centers as if they are part of the family,” and another lauded a “very good network of qualified service centers.”

Chris Barkley, chief pilot of BJI operator Tutel-Salita, praised an interior completion by Standard Aeron’s Associated Air Center. “On time and on budget,” he wrote. Many Bombardier operators praised authorized service centers such as Duncan Aviation, Jet Aviation, Midcoast Aviation and Penta Aviation. “Duncan provided nosegear service that Bombardier could not do,” wrote Williams Sonoma aviation department manager Ron Frewick about the company’s Challenger 601-3R.

One Challenger 300 operator worried that “Midcoast seem to be over capacity.”

Two Challenger 300 operators said there aren’t enough authorized service centers. While Bombardier expends a lot of effort vetting and monitoring its authorized service center network, a Challenger 601-3R operator explained, “The apparent lack of control by the [manufacturer] over the authorized service centers leaves me to shy away from visiting these facilities.”

Learjet operators listed a large variety of facilities they were happy with, including Lider Texto Aerospace (“best in Brazil”), Hagen

A Brazilian Citation VII operator complained that, “TAM is a shame in technical support.”

Falcon operators spoke highly of Western Aircraft in Boise, Idaho, and Duncan Aviation’s Lincoln, Neb. facility. Cindy Potash, chief pilot at Falcon 100 operator Rafael Vinoly Architects, found problems with Landmark Aviation (now Standard Aeron) in Springfield, Ill.: “Workmanship, average; paint, average or below for what they charge; interior refurbishment, below average; and billing horrible.” Another Falcon operator praised Standard Aeron Springfield, which “wrote the book on the 20-5, but a lot of the people that wrote it have left.”

While most Falcon operators that mentioned Western Aircraft praised the company, a 2000EX operator wrote that Western has scheduling difficulties and sometimes this operator needs to use non-authorized Falcon maintainers “with extensive Falcon knowledge to get quality work done.”

“TAM is the best authorized service center for us has been Duncan at Lincoln,” wrote Jorge Lara, flight operations director of Falcon 50 operator Corbata, in Quito, Ecuador.

A United operator noted that Premier Air Center/West Star Aviation’s Dallas facility provided “very poor service.”

Authorized service center Primair Aircraft good experience. SpectraJet (“superb and exceptionally skilled”), Stevens Aviation (“perhaps the best anywhere”), Duncan Aviation (“always first class, outstanding”), Cessna Air (“they are great”), JetCorp (“very good response”) and Reliable Jet (“we have been pretty happy”).

Cessna Citation operators also cited a number of facilities that deliver excellent service, including Premier Air Center/West Star Aviation, Stevens Aviation, Amperion, Jet Aviation, Yingling Aviation and Corporate Air. A United operator noted that Premier Air Center/West Star Aviation’s Dallas facility provided “very poor service.”

Authorized service center Premier Aircraft good experience. Falcon 50s to the 500C/500A, giving the other airplane more speed and range.

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Gulfstream work in the U.S. is done by factory-owned service centers; Gulfstar Aviation in Waterford, Mich., is the only authorized service center. Outside the U.S., however, most facilities are authorized; Gulfstream owns a maintenance base at London Luton. “Pentastar Aviation is by far the best one, if the not the top facility I have ever used for Gulfstream and Rolls-Royce maintenance,” said Ken Brickett, director of maintenance for GIV-SP operator Parafin Air. A GV operator commented, “Pentastar will work with the FAA to give the customers what they want.”

While Jet Aviation Basel provides excellent support, according to G450 director of maintenance William Reiisch, another GV operator said, “Jet Aviation Dubai technicians are not fully trained or qualified.”

A Beechjet 400 operator had this suggestion for the Hawker Beechcraft authorized service center network: “They should share a common database with factory centers regarding maintenance history.”

Duncan Aviation, said Hawker 1000 maintenance scheduler Mike Sleightsholme at Australia-based Boston LHF, is an overall great company.”

A Hawker 800-series operator cited Midcoast Aviation as having “the most mature and experienced organization.”

“AeroBaine is an excellent service center,” wrote another 800-series operator, “especially under South American standards.”

Opinion was more split among operators of Hawker Beechcraft turboprops. “Several of the authorized service centers have failed to meet the standards set by Hawker Beechcraft in terms of quality of work performed,” wrote Frank Bernhard, managing principal and executive vice president flight operations for a King Air 200 operator.

A King Air 300 operator said, “They are more part changers than troubleshooters.”

Jeff Munzel, chief pilot for a Las Vegas King Air 350 operator, likes authorized service centers better than factory service centers, adding, “We’ve had the best luck with Woodland Aviation in Woodland, Calif.”

In one of the few comments received about Westward support, one operator said that “Trimarc Aviation [Fort Worth, Texas] has been extremely helpful in maintaining our aircraft.”

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to let me know what was going on,” said MU-2 operator Bruce Abel.

Pilatus PC-12 operators also were effusive about the service they received. “Both Aviation Sales [Englewood, Colo.] and Epps Aviation [Atlanta] are great service centers to work with,” said chief pilot Loren Hofer.

“Western Aircraft [Boise, Idaho]: Great work on time,” said another PC-12 operator.

The go-to maintenance shop for Piper Cheyennes is clearly Cheyenne Air Service in Washington, Pa. “Cheyenne Air Service is outstanding,” said Cheyenne 400LS pilot Craig Jouber.

Sikorsky S-76 pilot safety manager Thomas Corrigan is happy with Associated Aircraft Group of Wappingers Falls, N.Y. Associated’s John Landi, he said, “is the S-76 man.”

FACTORY SERVICE CENTERS

When it comes to factory-owned service, Bell Helicopter offers “reasonable technical support,” according to captain James Roland, “but rotor blade shops poor.”

“Edwards and Associates [owned by Bell] is one of the best facilities we have worked with,” said chief pilot Allen Rossi.


“The factory service centers work well on aircraft, but Dallas is badly lacking. East Coast centers are spaced out much better,” explained a Challenger 300 operator.

While one Challenger 601-3A operator said that Bombardier’s Hartford, Conn., facility “comes through for us when we’re tight on schedule,” another 604/605 operator said that Hartford is so disconnected they are not even a consideration. Still another wrote, “Very sloppy work.”

“[Bombardier’s] Dallas [facility] has always met or exceeded our expectation with timely deliveries,” said head of aviation operation C. Fortmann, who operates a Challenger 604/605.

Oakland, Calif.-based Williams Sonoma has switched service providers, according to aviation department manager Ron Freewick. “The Dallas service center has gone from good to horrible,” he wrote.

For Global Express/XRS operator Jet Aviation, however, manager of maintenance Robert Kleinenschmidt said, “Bombardier Aviation Services Dallas always does a great job for us.”

“We have been using the Hartford service center for six years now,” wrote technician Ronald Earl at Global/XRS operator Citigroup Corporate Aviation, “and the quality of service has been surprisingly consistent.”

Don Maclean, who works for Global XRS operator Barnes and Noble, wrote, “[Hartford had] had such a loss of experienced techs that we choose not to go there. We decided to go with [Bombardier] Fort Lauderdale a try and they did a fantastic job.”

Learjet operators expressed a variety of opinions about Bombardier-owned service centers. “Support for AOG situations from the [Bombardier] facilities has been outstanding,” said Tom Robinson, district chief of maintenance for Learjet 45/45XR operator Midwest Aviation in Portland, Ore.

“Knowledge of legacy Learjet models seems to be declining,” wrote one concerned Learjet 35A operator. “Recent trip to Wichita provided inadequate service.”

But Learjet 40/40XR director of operations Roger Lipcanon found “the Wichita service center has improved in reliability and quality considerably over the last 12 months.”

“Hartford service center does a great job,” said another Learjet 45/45XR operator. “Wichita service center poor to average.”

“Pathetic!” complained a Learjet 45/45XR operator. “The apathy and dismal attitude of the service center employees and technicians is depressing….We will not return to a Bombardier service center if another option is available.”

Bombardier’s Dallas and Fort Lauderdale facilities, said Learjet 45/45XR chief pilot Glen Hicks, “do a very good job at meeting timelines and objectives.”

Some Cessna Citation operators expressed concern about Cessna’s planned shutdown of the Long Beach, Calif., service center and its relocation to a new facility in Mead, Ariz. Wylie Investments chief pilot Les Briggs wrote, “Disappointed at Citation having little future presence in Southern California with the impending closure of Long Beach service center.”

“[Sacramento] service center does an excellent job of listening to customers’ needs and designing a repair solution to meet the mission,” said Frank Bernhard, managing principal and executive vice president Flight Operations for a Bravo operator. “Orlando, Fl. is the best place to go. Wichita is terrible,” wrote Boyd Roberts, line captain for another Bravo operator. Also praising Orlando was Eddie Velt, aviation department manager for Boyd Aviation, in Clayton, Ala.; “Excellent service in all categories.”

A Citation VII operator had this to say: “Wichita Citation service center: we always have a good response with a very good mechanic crew chief…The problem they always have is lack of enough knowledgeable people and shift communication trouble.”

One Citation X operator commented, “Everything was good except updating the maintenance logs,” while another wrote, “Nice job and they do not like to have to complete certificate holders’ required paperwork and sometimes refuse to do so.”

A West Coast-based Falcon 2000EX operator is disappointed that Dassault Falcon Jet has only two factory service centers in the U.S.—in Little Rock, Ark., and Wilmington, Del.

John Alexander, senior aircraft technician for a 900EX operator, said, “Dassault is finally realizing the importance of factory service centers to the overall customer support experience.”

One Embraer Legacy 600 operator said, “Additional new factory service centers will be of great help.” Embraer’s U.S. service center is located in Nashville, Tenn., and at that facility, said a Legacy 600 operator, “service is good.”

According to Pfizer manager of maintenance Greg Hamblin, Embraer is “experienced on aircraft, but not great with corporate customers. Still has airline mentality.”

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Lufthansa Bombardier Aviation Services, a joint venture between Lufthansa and Bombardier, extends the reach of Bombardier Business Aviation Services beyond North America.

A Eurocopter operator said, “The factory service center in Texas could do much more if they could get the support from France.”

Executive Jet Management aircraft manager Mark Gardiner commented, “Our G150 has been a bit unusual as far as the problems we have but [Gulfstream Dallas] has stepped up to the plate.”

A less happy G150 operator said, “The service center at Dallas is very slow and the maintenance technicians have inadequate knowledge of the aircraft systems.”

Director of maintenance William Roetheke said, “Gulfstream Savannah—outstanding customer service, excellent technical ability of technical staff.”

A G500 operator said, “The Appleton facility is a great service center,” but added, “Long Beach Gulfstream facility is terrible with customer support.”

“Gulfstream Laton (UK) refused to work on aircraft when AOG for HF radios,” reported an international G500 operator. Michael Magnani, director of maintenance for G500 operator Central Management Services, commented, “By far, the worst care our airplane ever receives is at a service center.”

A GV operator wrote, “The Long Beach service center is a disaster.”

“Our relationship with [Hawker Beechcraft] in Tampa, Fla., was outstanding,” wrote Hawker 800A chief pilot Brian Saffran.

A King Air 350 operator wrote, “I’ve not enjoyed working with the factory service centers.”

A King Air B200 operator had this to say about Hawker Beechcraft factory-owned service centers: “Bad experience nearly every time, typically due to inability to keep customer informed.”

Commenting about Mitsubishi Heavy Industries America’s ownership of MU-2 service center Intercontinental Jet in Tulsa, Okla., chief pilot William Jackson said, “Mitsubishi...is supporting the MU-2 with a factory service center. What other manufacturer in the history of aviation has done anything like that?”

Said MU-2 owner Tim Cappelli, “This organization always has the answers and the fix.”

Sabreliner operators were as enthusiastic.

A technician studies aircraft data at Gulfstream’s London Laton facility.
“Extremely good,” said a Sabre 60 operator. “All personnel are outstanding,” said James Foster, aviation manager for Houston-based Sabre 65 operator Susman.

An S-76 operator wrote this about Sikorsky’s company-owned Keystone Helicopter facility in Coatesville, Pa.: “Very knowledgeable about S-76; responsive to our concerns.”

PARTS AVAILABILITY

“Very difficult to get parts in the U.S.,” reported American Operations general manager Demetrio Fialdelli about his experience with AgustaWestland.

One Bell Helicopter operator wrote that parts availability is “excellent, just about everything normally required is in stock and surprises are taken care of in a timely manner.” But another operator said, “It is not unusual for there to be no stock of items with mandatory retirement lives.”

Challenger 300 operators are concerned about parts availability. “There are very limited parts for the Challenger 300,” wrote an operator, “like generators and generator control units.”

“Insufficient parts in Europe, which extends to all AOG situations,” said another Challenger 300 operator.

“Given the age of our airplanes,” said a Challenger 601-3R operator, “Bombardier does a pretty good job, although it is getting tougher.”

“Bombardier fails to stock enough of the high-failure items,” wrote another 601-3R operator.

For a Challenger 800/850/900 operator, “Parts could be better. There are more in numbers of this type aircraft [CRJs] versus standard Challengers; however, Bombardier 90 percent of the time indicates no stock or never sold this part before; no sales history!”

None Global Express operators are having problems with parts availability, but Jet Aviation captain Kevin Van Splunder said, “Most parts were available or available within a day or two… never grounded.”

“Parts have not gotten much better,” said another Global operator, “I just don’t think they care.”

A Learjet 31 operator said, “Parts are getting scarce.”

Parts availability, said Learjet 55 pilot Keith Knoth, “seems to be OK most of the time but sometimes parts are not available at all.”

“Almost impossible to get parts,” wrote Learjet 55 chief pilot Louis Colombo. A Cessna Citation X operator said that parts availability has been “excellent.”

The operator of a Citation M2/SP5/SPII reports a vastly different experience. “Cessna never has the parts and they take two months to make and get them to us,” wrote a Citation operator.

Citation III chief pilot Patrick Kaspzak said parts availability “is starting to be an issue with a legacy aircraft.”

Conquest operators are facing problems obtaining parts. “Cessna seems to want to phase out older aircraft,” said one Conquest II operator. Another wrote, “Very bad. New [supplemental inspection document], Cessna was not ready again for the demand.”

“Dassault has improved immensely its parts in stock,” commented Corbantrade flight operations director Jorge Lara. “Still, there are some parts that take a while to obtain, and they are found in France or at some other place, but they will do their best to provide it to you.”

A 2000EX operator expressed this concern: “Dassault is in desperate need of a foothold on the West Coast parts facility.”

“Seems sufficient, according to a 2000EX operator, “although the list of parts in normal/development is extensive.”

While Pilatus manager of aircraft maintenance Greg Hamelink is happy about Embraer Legacy 600 parts availability, he said the downside is that parts distribution is limited to only one facility, in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Other Legacy 600 operators were more critical. One wrote, “Poor, often takes a long time to reach the aircraft.” Another commented, “Very bad. Especially when it comes to service bulletin kits/parts.”

Eurocopter operators had much more to say about parts availability than other survey categories. “Excellent around the world and getting better in the U.S.,” wrote one operator.

“Poor,” said another operator, “especially with a current in-production model, still cannot get parts.”

“Slow boat from France for all unstocked parts, which means most of my orders.”

According to Air Methods pilot Cecil Harris, Eurocopter parts availability is “horrible.”

R. Rose, chief pilot for a Gulfstream G100 operator, said that, “Having parts in Dallas is a bonus. Getting support for unique parts from Israel is poor at best.”

“Gulfstream has a great spares department according to a GIV-SP operator. “If they don’t have a stock in stock they will find it and get it to you overnight.”

Other operators complained that Gulfstream parts are harder to obtain from distant spare depots. “Seems like most parts are coming from Savannah or Memphis,” wrote David Bass, director of maintenance for G550 operator Skybird Aviation. “This drives up the cost of shipping parts versus if they had stock in Long Beach.”

“Gulfstream is a great company,” said G550 chief of maintenance Alex Goodwin. “Problem: London Luton still does not carry enough!”

Most commenters noted an improvement in Hawker Beechcraft parts availability, although one Premier ITPA operator said, “Poor availability of parts for an aircraft currently in production.”

“Much better than they were in previous years,” said a Hawk 800-series operator.

Scott Sonnhalp, manager of flight operations for King Air 300 operator Alliance Laundry Systems in Oshkosh, Wis., said, “For the most part, parts are readily available.”

“Parts for earlier models getting hard to find,” said a D200C operator.

Mitsubishi MU-2 owner/operator Jim Paige said, “Fantastic for an aircraft that’s 23 years out of production.”

“I have never had a parts problem in the last five years of ownership,” said owner/operator Tim Cappelli.

Pilatus PC-12 parts are “usually available within 24 hours,” according to chief pilot Loren Hofer.

Chris Wegener, manager of flight operations for PC-12 operator MRY Services, said, “Common items such as generators are not kept in stock. This adds time to an unscheduled maintenance issue.”

Piper Cheyenne parts are difficult to find, according to two operators, but according Augus Westland (AGA) to Air Partners chief pilot Royce Ringes, “Most are available.”

Sabreliner operators also are concerned about dwindling parts stocks. “Parts are becoming hard to get sometimes,” said a Sabre 65 operator.

Sikorsky parts availability said one operator, “is terrible.” Another reported that Sikorsky is “slow to respond for parts for AKG.” And one operator said, “Some older S-70B components require hunting around to locate spares.”

Bomardier’s warehouse near Frontenac Airport is designed to expedite parts distribution in Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

COST OF PARTS

Parts prices have always been an issue for aircraft operators, and there was no shortage of comments about this subject. AgustaWestland operators said, “In euros and expensive” and “the cost is 25 percent more than list price.”

Among the comments from Bell operators were, “Very pricey,” and “cost is getting prohibitive.”

Operators of the Boeing Business Jet gave mixed responses. One labeled the company’s cost of parts “high,” while another called it “reasonable.”

Operators of Bombardier’s entire line of aircraft made similar comments about the cost of parts. One Challenger 300 operator wrote, “Just when you think you have it under control, you are charged for $8,000 for a $2,000 window shade.” Another complained, “Several times (even though we are under Smart Parts), we have found that Bombardier has charged three to four times the amount we can pay for the identical part through a third party.”

A Challenger 601-3R operator had this to say: “Cost of parts from the manufacturer is outrageous.” The operator of a Challenger 604/650 wrote, “Overall, the cost of parts seems to be reasonable.”

According to the operator of a Learjet 31A, “Many parts are reasonable but many are not. For example, yoke escutcheon is $350; this is a plastic plate with the Learjet logo printed on it.” “Would pay more if we were certain that we could get good parts,” wrote the operator of a Learjet 36A.

The operator of a Citation 500 wrote, “Easy and cheap to get,” while a Citation XLS operator commented, “While the cost of parts is relatively low, Cessna does keep a tight hold on the parts and it is difficult to find certain parts outside Cessna.”

The operator of a Citation X perhaps summed up the attitude of operators of all different models. “We can complain all we want, but they are what they are.”

A Falcon 2000 operator noted, “Expensive, good value and closely in line with the industry.” A Falcon 20-5 operator commented, “Overpriced in many areas.”

Of the Embraer Legacy 600, an operator had this to say, “Higher than Cessna, but not out of line for other heavy aircraft.”

Comments about the cost of Eurocopter parts ran the gamut from “the most expensive on the market,” to “fair and reasonable.”

A G100 operator wrote, “Parts cost has gone up 300 percent on some items since Gulfstream bought Galaxie.”
The operator of a G500 commented, "Cost of ground support equipment is absolutely out of control and crazy," while another G500 operator noted, "The price of the parts is astronomical." A G19SP operator had a different take, writing, "Most parts deliver good value for the money spent."

Hawker Beechcraft operators were not so understanding. One King Air 300 operator wrote, "Parts costs are insane," while the operator of a Hawker 800 series complained, "Totally outrageous."

Mitsubishi MU-2 operators seemed satisfied with the cost of parts. "I've found the cost of MU-2 parts to be reasonable," wrote one. Of the Pilatus PC-12, opera-

Parts availability remains an issue for AIN readers, who do not want to have to wait for parts to be delivered.

tors had this to say about cost of parts: "excellent," "expensive," and "euro exchange rate is getting worse every day."

Operators of the Piper Cheyenne were split on the cost of parts, with responses ranging from "average" to "very, very overpriced."

A Sabreliner operator asked, "What would you expect from an aircraft no longer in production for a number of years?"

Regarding the cost of parts for Sikorskys, operator responses ran the gamut from "prices are increasing like crazy" to "reasonable."

**AOG RESPONSE**

A Brazilian AgustaWestland operator reported that AOG response is "good and fast."

"AOG works," said Hillcrest Aircraft assistant chief pilot Stuart Taft about Bell Helicopter, "but takes some persistence."

"Very poor," reported another. Four respondents were happy with Bombardier Challenger/Global AOG response, but one said, "Poor at best!"

While director of operations Roger Lipman had three Learjet 40/40XR AOG situations during the past year, "and all were handled great," Steven Reed, chief pilot for Learjet 60/60XR operator Bristow Manufacturing, wrote, "We have experienced five AOG situations and none has gone well."

Cessna Citation operators have mostly had great success with AOGs, but one Brazilian Citation VII operator said, "They say, 'one week,' and I assure you, it's at least one month or more."

Dassault Falcon also received high marks for AOG. One Falcon 50 operator wrote, "No better to be found anywhere in the world." But another Falcon 50 operator commented, "We have been disappointed by the Falcon attitude in response to an AOG situation."

One Eurocopter operator reported "exceptional attention to the customer's needs." But others complained about "horrible" and

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"non-existent" AOG responses. "An AOG shipment can take up to seven days," wrote lead mechanic Don Crawford.

Gulfstream operators praised the company’s AOG response. "Gulfstream is an outstanding company when it comes to responding to an AOG," said Richard Stoulil, chief pilot for G200 operator Hornet Foods.

A Hawker 800-series operator wrote: "Broke down and waited eight hours to get a response."

Another 800-series operator reported a different experience, writing, "We ordered a part AOG and Hawker Beechcraft was willing to generate their own flight to get us going."

"Mitsubishi MU-2 owner Greg Mink wrote, "Outstanding support for AOG.""

A PC-12 operator and a Sabreliner 60 operator used one word to summarize their manufacturers’ AOG response: "Excellent."

One word also sufficed for a Sikorsky operator’s opinion: "terrible."

**WARRANTY FULFILLMENT**

"When work is absolutely needed," wrote one pilot for a Citation bizjet, "Overall excellent; however, they can be a bit picky."

"A King Air 200 operator said, "Difficult to navigate their system.""

"Chris Wegener, manager of flight operations for Pilatus PC-12 operator MVR Services, wrote, "If a problem exists with a part and Pilatus cannot duplicate the problem on a bench check then they will not cover the part.""

"At or above industry standard," said a Sabreliner operator.

"Have to watch the transactions--lots of errors," reported a Sikorsky operator.

**TECHNICAL MANUALS**

"Well written, clear and easy to use," wrote an AgustaWestland operator, while another said, "very poor, need update."

"One of the best in the industry," wrote chief pilot Enrique Buegnot of Bell Helicopter.

"Another, Bell Helicopter heard that "Piper has no support in manuals or supplements" for his airplane.

"A Hawker 800 operator commented that "the manuals are clear and easy to use," while a Learjet operator said that "the manuals are complete and easy to use."

"Several operators commented about the tech tips at Gulfstream. Comments included, "Very knowledgeable, but overworked with too many airplanes," and "always there when you need them."

A G100/ITT operator wrote, "Tech tips want nothing to do with older aircraft."

"Our local Gulfstream rep makes the other manufacturer reps look bad. Here just enough, but not too much," commented one G100 operator.

"Willing to spend whatever time it takes to meet our needs. Excellent knowledge of the aircraft and systems," commented Hawker Beechcraft 800 series operator of his technical reps.

Another took a different tack, "Tired of

"the Nesvay program very good," said Encore/Encore+ chief pilot Ben Bagwell.

A Citation V operator, however, said, "The program is fair to good, but there seem to be a lot of problems with the graphics and printing."

A Falcon 2000 operator commented that "the manuals contain no procedures for certain items. Some procedures poorly written."

"Unfortunately, Dassault maintenance manuals are not as good as they can be," said a Falcon 50 operator, and "extensive."

"Jorge Lara, flight operations director of Falcon 50 operator Corbantrade in Quito, Ecuador, said, "Now all manuals are on DVD, which is great."

"An Embraer Legacy 600 operator commented, "Very good when revised in a timely manner."

Robert Terrell, chief pilot and safety director for Eclipse operator Eclipse Air, wrote, "Technical manuals are improving slowly since Aerospace days."

"The DVD is easy to update," said an operator. "We should know the airplane some yourself or they will lead you down the wrong path at times," wrote one Citation CJ3 operator. Another commented, "Always available to me and if they can't find an answer, won't shove the concern until it is resolved."

"Operators of Dassault Falcon 900s had mixed reactions to the company's tech reps. One operator of a Falcon 2000 wrote, "Field service reps have come out at all hours and met the aircraft."

"An operator of a Falcon 50 commented, "We have been disappointed with the knowledge level of the help desk...usually we are forced to figure out the solution to our problem with little or no help from them."

"Michael Magnus, director of maintenance for Central Management Services of Camarillo, Calif., praised the G550 manuals: "The best...takes all of the mystery out of what you're supposed to do and how you're supposed to do it."

A GV operator noted that the manuals have "many errors and omissions."

"A Hawker 800 operator said that "the manuals are clear and easy to use," while an operator of a Citation X commented that "the manuals are complete and easy to use."

"One pilot said, "Pitiful warranty policies. The warranty department does anything they can keep from paying a warranty claim."

Cessna Citation operators expressed near-unanimous satisfaction with Cessna’s warranty fulfillment, although one Sovereign operator noted. "Too many parts have a short warranty period and have proved unreliable."

A Falcon 900EX operator’s one-word comment of "lousy" was balanced by four other operators who praised Dassault Falcon Jet’s warranty fulfillment as "straightforward, painless" and "never had any problem getting warranty issues resolved."

While operators credited Embraer with...
Nothing is more important in an operation than overall aircraft reliability, and survey respondents clearly expressed any issues they found.

"Despite fragile weather and unpredictable flight conditions, the Citation has proven itself to be a workhorse with the highest degree of reliability," said another.

"We have had a couple of issues with aircraft insurance, but our maintenance and systems are excellent." said yet another.
pilot and safety director for Eurocopter operator LifeFlight Rescue Air One.

A Gulfstream G150 operator said, “Potential issues have been thwarted by superior in-house maintenance department.”

“Reliability of aircraft is very poor,” wrote another G150 operator.

“Excellent… one of the best improvement stories in corporate aviation,” said a G200 operator.

“[H]e seems there is always some kind of little issue with the aircraft,” said G200 maintenance supervisor Charles Morgan.

“Typically some kind of intermittent problem that can’t be duplicated on the ground.”

Reliability of large-cabin Gulfstreams was more prevalent in operators’ comments and nearly summarised by Brett Worlock, assistant chief pilot for GIII-SP operator First Flight, who wrote, “We constantly go to the Diplomatic Republic of the Congo and wouldn’t be very comfortable going in any aircraft other than a Gulfstream.”

“This G550 is my 12th brand-new Gulfstream to over 27 years as an operator and it is, by far, the best and most reliable one yet,” said Michael Magnin, director of maintenance for Central Management Services.

A Hawker 800-series operator said its airplane “just keeps on ticking.”

But two Premier I/A operators had some reservations. “Average at best,” said one. “Would like to see an overall emphasis on reliability. The airplane is fantastic. Certain vendor parts are not.”

Robert Long, director of flight operations/chief pilot for Paramount Jet, said, “In the first six months, the airplane had six system failures that required 42 days of downtime.”

King Air operators like the airplane’s reliability, but some experienced systems problems. “Air conditioning is worthless,” wrote Dale Bryan, director of aviation for King Air’s 350 operator Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee.

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Howard’s environment points.

West Jet’s rel.

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