

Experts present opinions on remotely piloted ops

by Thierry Dubois

The business aviation community had a chance to discuss its concerns over the likelihood of remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) flying in civil airspace during an EBACE conference session on Tuesday. Devising rules that ensure safety while impeding neither progress nor prosperity is the main challenge, the audience heard. The bottom line is that the integration of RPAS into the same airspace as other commercial traffic is only a question of time.

Among the interested parties represented were the Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (UVSI) and AeroSpace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD) lobbying associations, Eurocontrol's Sesar program, the European Aviation Safety Agency and RPAS manufacturer SenseFly.

"We have to create universally accepted rules," Peter van Blyenburgh, UVSI president, emphasized. A number of countries (15 in Europe) have started creating rules, without any harmonization, he said. Those proliferating rules do not even include a pilot approval process, he noted. Yet, there are over 3,000 commercial operators in Europe—half of them in France.

The Joint Authorities for Rulemaking on Unmanned Systems (JARUS) is striving to harmonize the rules worldwide. There are 28 members in JARUS, including two thirds of Europe and countries like the U.S., Australia and Russia. But all they can do is make recommendations, as opposed to binding regulation. Van Blyenburgh hinted that China has been invited to participate. "Chinese manufacturers produce 10,000 to 20,000 RPAS a month," he pointed out.

Eric Sivel, an official with the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), is the JARUS chairman. "We have chosen to go for performance-based rules because we are walking in uncharted territory," he said. EASA prepared what then became the so-called Riga declaration, defining "how we are going to regulate RPAS," he went on.

A key aspect has been "detect and avoid" (or "sense and avoid"), derived from the "see and avoid" notion. "Today's technology allows RPAS flights in non-segregated airspace;

sense-and avoid will be part of the Sesar 2020 research effort," Denis Koehl, a Sesar senior advisor, said. Paul Lange, a U.S. lawyer, expressed a diverging view by asserting the technology "is not there yet to ensure the same level of separation as conventional, manned aircraft." There is no commercial operator in the U.S. yet.

All RPAS Are Not Alike

The European Defense Agency's MIDCAS project, due to be completed this year, stands to benefit civil RPAS operations because it has demonstrated how larger aircraft can operate, ASD's Jean-Louis Roch said. He stressed that a distinction should be made between two kinds of RPAS: cooperative ones (i.e. having a transponder on board) and non-cooperative ones. The latter need sensors like radars and cameras to be detected and this has been demonstrated, too.

To prevent some RPAS from flying into prohibited airspace, geofencing is being considered. EASA's Sivel pitched the idea of a cell phone-type chip that would enable geofencing and owner identification.

EASA wants to address the most urgent issues via a three-pronged approach, depending on the level of risk, Sivel went on. In one of them, "specific-risk operations," the operator will be asked to identify the risk and mitigate it. In this situation flying a RPAS over a city may be allowed, providing the operator has solutions to protect the public. □



HONORING THE EBACE SHOW'S FOUNDERS

EBACE organizers seized the occasion of the 15th running of the show to honor four of the luminaries whose efforts made it what it is today. For the first EBACE in 2001, organizers hoped for a few hundred attendees. In fact, more than 3,600 registered. There were 200 exhibitors and 30 aircraft in the static display. At this year's EBACE, more than 13,000 are expected to attend with nearly 500 exhibitors and 60 aircraft on display. At a special luncheon yesterday, EBACE recognized the early contributions of NBAA and EBAA leaders Jack Olcott, Fernand Francois, Kathleen Blouin and Brian Humphries. As part of the awards luncheon, the honorees participated in a panel discussion moderated by William Garvey, editor-in-chief of *Business and Commercial Aviation* and Wilson Leach, managing director of *AIN* Publications. All are pictured above, l to r: Garvey, Olcott, Francois, Blouin, Humphries and Leach.

JCB Aero signs a contract for nose-to-tail Boeing 757

VIP cabin interior JCB Aero (Booth J051) is refurbishing an entire Boeing 757 interior which it plans to deliver in August from its facility in southwest France. In the U.S., a new workshop is up and running near Dassault's completion facility in Little Rock, Arkansas. JCB is here exhibiting lighter pieces of furniture for VIP cabins.

For the 757, the long-awaited deal is now signed and the aircraft interior layout approved.

Design is under way, while the old cabin is being dismantled. "This is the first nose-to-tail refurbishment we have performed at our Auch facility," CEO Jean-Claude Beaudet told *AIN*. It will include everything from carpets to galleys, lavatory, seats and IFE. The aircraft is operated by JetMagic Malta.

On display at the show is a pair of seats designed by JCB, featuring carbon-fiber composite materials. "We save 10-15 percent in

weight," Beaudet said. Another piece of furniture on the stand combines a pop-up TV and storage space. Thanks to "molded wood and new fibers," Beaudet said, it weighs 31 lbs instead of 40 lbs with conventional materials.

In March, JCB delivered a first Falcon 2000 interior from its new workshop in Little Rock. Under a contract with Dassault Falcon Jet, it plans to deliver a total five this year and 12 next year. The workforce now stands at 30 employees. Hiring is accelerating for the headcount to reach 70 by year-end and 150 late in 2016. Investment is gearing up, too, to shorten manufacturing cycles. —T.D.



GETTING BUSINESS DONE

Jet Aviation head of FBO services for EMEA and Asia Monica Beusch signed an international handling contract on Tuesday with Saad Alazwari, CEO of Riyadh-based charter operator Nasjet. With a growing fleet, now numbering 70 aircraft, Nasjet will receive global handling services from Jet Aviation. This scene is just one example of the countless business deals formed at EBACE.