



LEADING BUSINESS JET SERVICES IN ASIA

INTERVIEW WITH **BRUCE WATSON**,
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, METROJET

Interview by Litalia Yoakum

Celebrating its 20th year of service in 2017, business jet operator and maintenance provider Metrojet has showed immense growth. The Hong Kong-based company has several aircraft MRO facilities across the region and continues to prosper. With a recently-awarded International Standard for Business Aircraft Operation (IS-BAO) Stage 3 certification, Metrojet is committed to world-class safety standards and understands the importance and necessity for aircraft infrastructure, as Metrojet Chief Operating Officer, Bruce Watson explained.



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What services does Metrojet provide?

Metrojet provides aircraft management, charter, and aircraft maintenance services all under one roof. We have an MRO facility based in Hong Kong, Zhuhai (China), Clark (the Philippines), and Mumbai (India), with dedicated certification/qualifications at each facility and OEM approvals that include Gulfstream, Bombardier, Embraer and Rolls Royce.

What is the general outlook of business aviation in the Asia Pacific region?

Though there are operational challenges with slot restrictions in various countries across this region, the growth potential of business aviation in this part of the world remains strong. It had previously been projected that there will be 1,700 business jets coming to Asia in the next 10 years. This figure perhaps is now unlikely with the current challenges, but this shows the potential that still exists.

How does the region fare in terms of infrastructure?

Business aviation is still in its infancy for many countries in Asia, so it is expected that the infrastructure will need to be built to cater for this growing sector.

Many Asian countries are keen to see the growth in business aviation and recognize its value to business and commerce.

However, infrastructure growth can have extensive time scales to implement and significant investment costs to justify, so progress rarely keeps pace with demand.

Most countries in Asia face a similar macro environment; however, challenges can be very localized in nature therefore differ from country to country. As an example, Hong Kong has one of the dominant centers of commerce in the region and considerable business aviation demand, but the aviation infrastructure can no longer support that demand and there are no domestic alternatives. On the other hand, China has recognized the strategic need for business and general aviation and is challenged to develop the infrastructure fast enough to keep pace. Two very different challenges for such close neighbors.

Over the long term, I am confident the business aviation industry will develop and flourish like that of the US and Europe. We can see successful growth ventures in the MRO business in Singapore that show development in this sector can work.

What can be done to overcome this challenge?

We need to stay closely coordinated with a consistent message, common voice and not let the competitive nature of our sector undermine the big picture progress. We need to ensure government, legislators and the public understand the direct benefit our industry has on economies and commercial development, let alone the direct high skill jobs created and supply chain value it can drive. AsBAA is working hard to achieve this in the region and they need all our support to be successful.

How is Metrojet dealing with this challenge of insufficient infrastructure?

2017 is Metrojet's 20th year anniversary; being the first business aviation company in Hong Kong, Metrojet has seen a lot throughout the past 20 years. We have experienced the rapid growth in China and the acute drop when the economy slowed. We have also seen gradual development of the industry in neighboring Southeast Asian countries. Nevertheless, we strongly believe the long-term future is in Asia, and therefore we have invested in establishing our own MRO facilities in Zhuhai, Clark, and Mumbai – places that are strategically located to service the projected growth in China and Southeast Asia.

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What is the company doing to deal with the shortage of aviation personnel in the region?

Training is of utmost importance to counter the shortage of talent. We bring in subject matter experts from across the globe to build our capabilities and train our people and invest heavily to send our local talent abroad to be trained. We have developed and implemented a robust human resources platform and have been awarded two Gold and two Bronze awards at the Human Resources Innovation Awards 2016 in recognition of the efforts in HR Strategic Plan, Retention Strategy, Employee Engagement and Talent Management.

Nevertheless, it is true that this area is persistently challenging to keep ahead of the curve and we continue to work on sustainable solutions to address it. I would like to see true collaboration within the industry, possibly in the form of an academy, to develop local talent focused specifically towards the business aviation sector.

What are some of the partnerships that contribute to Metrojet's success?

Metrojet is thankful for all the partnerships that we have established, be it joint ventures or partnerships with OEMs to offer dedicated services to our clients. For example, the trust from OEMs that have granted Metrojet the permit to be an authorized service facility is a very strong recognition of their confidence in our brand and in what we do, which all leads to the success of Metrojet.

Over 20 years we have built a strong brand and reputation and we will continue to develop.

What does the future hold for Metrojet over the next few years?

We are optimistic about the future of business aviation in Asia and we are here for the long run to service our clients across aircraft management, charter and maintenance sectors. Over 20 years we have built a strong brand and reputation and we will continue to develop despite the challenge of lack of infrastructure that we currently face. As a member of the Kadoorie group, we are aligned with the family motto of "Adhere and Prosper".

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