



Tailored for success

PrivatAir's new collection of crew uniforms celebrates the company's 30th anniversary with a style statement worthy of our commitment to unparalleled passenger service

THIS UNIFORM is PrivatAir's sixth design since the company was created with only 25 crew members. We wanted to project a uniform that would be classic, while presenting a different image. We liked a 'business' look for the airline so we chose to have ties for both men and women.

Innovations such as cufflinks on all the shirts, tailored aprons and fitted overcoats combine practicalities with an attention to quality unsurpassed in luxury aviation, setting our crew members apart wherever they travel. The new design now reflects the company's corporate look – silver and blue – and will be a perfect fit for our latest acquired aircraft, the VIP-configured Boeing 767.

During one month of real-world, day-long testing on our Zurich to New York business-class-only service, the clothing proved the value of a design process that lasted one year and involved a committee of flight crew staff from all our worldwide bases. The testing phase found, for example, that pilots preferred short-sleeve shirts but longer pullovers. This sort of feedback is extremely valuable as it enables us to change items, before production. The logistics of making up three sets of uniform samples, sending them to different bases and then organising the fitting of all our crew, has been a challenging task.

To ensure that each uniform is individually tailored, every crew member has a detailed file

with all their measurements, making future ordering both swift and precise.

The uniform that has emerged has a look and style we plan to keep for the next few years. The crew members, who appear in the photographs modelling the new uniform, were also involved with the design committee.

Once finalised, the uniforms have been welcomed by crews and passengers alike on both flights and catwalks this year. Unveiled at Geneva's annual business aviation show in May, the collection also includes luggage, scarves and soft caps.

Operational from August, the uniforms will be issued to more than 300 employees on all our scheduled and charter services. ■

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ago a plane left the United States bound for Panama. Armed with a team of 20 leading doctors, nurses, technicians and administrators, this was a flight that would go on to benefit millions of people in more than 85 countries around the world. It was the first flight of the ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital: the world's only airborne ophthalmic hospital and training facility.

ORBIS is a non-profit organisation whose mission is to preserve and restore sight across the developing world, where 90 per cent of blind people live. Chaired by Al Ueltschi, the founder of PrivatAir's crew training partner, FlightSafety International, ORBIS takes knowledge, skills and tools to where they are most needed, sharing them with in-country medical personnel, so that they can then treat the blind in their own local communities.

'The idea behind ORBIS was dreamt up by Dr David Paton in the early 1970s,' explains Ueltschi. 'He had travelled widely and was deeply troubled by the extent of curable eye diseases among the poorest nations of the world. He knew the technology existed to treat these people but there was no easy way to get help to them. Then David realised that if you could put the help that they needed inside an aeroplane, you could fly out to them. The next thing I knew, I was working alongside Betsy Tripp (the daughter of Pan Am's Warren Tripp) to try and acquire an aeroplane for free, oversee its transformation into a flying eye hospital, and then act as chairman of the continuing effort to keep it flying!'

There are an estimated 37 million people suffering from blindness worldwide, 28 million of whom could either be cured or prevented from going blind in the first place if they had access to proper ophthalmic care.

ORBIS realised long ago that not all of those needing help could be reached by foreign doctors simply donating their time to operate. What was really needed was an adequate eyecare infrastructure, trained staff and sustainable services. This is where ORBIS directs its efforts – training doctors, nurses, biomedical engineers and community healthcare workers, and enabling them to treat unnecessary blindness in their own countries.

The Flying Eye Hospital itself is divided



into three distinct sections: a small patient recovery ward at the rear of the aircraft; a state-of-the-art ophthalmic operating theatre in the centre; and a teaching room at the front, equipped with audio-visual technology to enable local medics to observe the eye surgery taking place next door. In some countries, ORBIS has managed to beam images of the surgery from the aircraft into a large room at a local airport, where up to 300 locally-based medical staff can watch the procedures.

The 'hospital' spends at least three weeks in each location so the onboard surgical team has time to perform a series of surgeries in front of an audience of local physicians before assisting local doctors in performing their own operations. The training can include a wide range of specialities including glaucoma, cornea, paediatric ophthalmology, eye banking,

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anaesthesia and biomedical engineering.

The Flying Eye Hospital is now endorsed by 70 world leaders, including the last three presidents of the United States, and three secretaries-general of the United Nations, which has helped raise both its profile and awareness of avoidable blindness among governments and communities worldwide. It has also been successful in breaking down political, cultural and religious boundaries.

'We've brought together people from across some of the world's greatest divides,' says Ueltschi. 'In Cuba, communist and capitalist leaders casually chatted on our

aircraft. We've had Jews and Arabs standing side by side on visits to the Middle East, as well as Greek and Turkish Cypriot dignitaries watching an operation onboard together.'

It has also helped change how governments view medical treatment. When ORBIS first visited Peru in 1982, transplants were illegal. However, the president, Belaunde Terry, was invited to watch a corneal transplant taking place in the onboard operating theatre. So impressed was he with the outcome of the surgery that the next day he pushed a new bill through parliament to change the law.

Today, ORBIS is more than just a flying

The Flying Eye Hospital, Orbis. The DC10 aircraft is a classroom, a working room and an operating theatre

From an original idea in the early 1970s to a global network of care committed to saving sight worldwide, ORBIS represents the very best that aviation and dedicated medical professionals can achieve

Visionary concept

hospital. By the beginning of the 1990s, it was becoming clear that, although the training programmes were proving phenomenally successful in advancing optical procedures in the developing world and curing avoidable blindness, there was still a need to educate people as to how to prevent its onset.

In response to this, ORBIS set up numerous permanent ground-based programmes in the countries that they felt had the greatest need. Now, more than 110 staff in five countries (China, Vietnam, India, Bangladesh and Ethiopia) continue the work of the Flying Eye Hospital by carrying out operations, training and educational programmes in local communities. Efforts are also underway in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Additionally, ORBIS's hospital-based training programmes and fellowships provide talented eyecare professionals with the opportunity to undertake advanced study with some of the world's most renowned experts at leading eyecare institutions.

Training is matched to the particular skills and strengths of the fellows, enabling them to develop in their chosen ophthalmic specialty. Upon completion, the trainee then returns home to put their newly-acquired expertise into practice.

By harnessing the power of the internet, ORBIS has also established Cyber-Sight, an innovative programme that enables ophthalmologists to provide advice to doctors in developing countries. Via the website, more than 500 doctors in partner hospitals across 38 countries now transmit patient data and digital images for assistance with diagnosis and case management, and take advantage of online training opportunities.

The success of ORBIS has been extraordinary. In the last year alone, it has performed surgery on 77,500 people and trained 31,000 doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers worldwide. Since its very first flight in 1982, it is estimated that 25 million people across the world have had their sight saved, either

through operations performed by the ORBIS medical team or by the tens of thousands of doctors that have been trained through the programme.

'The achievements of ORBIS over the last 25 years have been astounding,' remarked PrivatAir CEO Greg Thomas. 'PrivatAir is fully supportive of its work, which must be the finest example of how aviation can be put to the best use possible – saving people's sight.'

Funded by corporations, foundations and individuals, flown by volunteer pilots from several major air carriers, staffed by hundreds of volunteer medical staff, and with all maintenance performed by FedEx, ORBIS has grown into a global network of care, dedicated to saving sight worldwide.

Representing the best that both aviation and people can achieve for mankind, its mission is simply to continue fighting avoidable blindness worldwide in any way that it can. Now surely that's something that we can all set our sights on for the future. www.orbis.org ■



Light years ahead

Embraer's Phenom 100

The latest very light jets (VLJs) are destined to have a massive impact on the private aviation industry, appealing to a new generation of chartering clients. PrivatAir is poised to provide help and expertise

NEW AIRCRAFT developments are constantly changing the shape of private aviation – and the latest very light jets (VLJs) are no exception. These single-pilot aircraft, seating four to seven people and weighing up to 10,000 pounds are set to revolutionise the industry by making privately chartered jet travel accessible to the mass market for the first time.

The advantages of VLJs are many. With a typical flight range of about a thousand miles, they can utilise much shorter runways than commercial airliners and larger business jets, making them particularly useful for short point-to-point journeys. The aircraft have also been designed to operate on grass and gravel airstrips as well as tarmac and concrete, enabling passengers to get closer to their destination, whether it is on or off the beaten track.

However, it is the price tag of this aircraft that is really getting people hot under the collar. Priced at between \$1 million and \$3 million, it is about half the price of traditional small corporate jets, such as Cessna's entry-level Citation CJ1, with direct operating costs also running at about 50 per cent of what one would normally expect to pay. With such low costs, there is no doubt that VLJs will have enormous appeal for both cost- and

time-conscious individuals and middle managers for whom chartering has, up until now, been an unrealistic dream.

A few US-based fleet operators are already hedging their bets on the success of these new aircraft with the introduction of so-called 'air-taxi' services. Aimed at business travellers in particular, the idea is to use these aircraft to offer on-demand, per-seat pricing on flights between traditionally hard-to-reach airports – avoiding the hassle of commercial airlines, while still providing a less-expensive option than today's air charter.

It all sounds fantastic, but this new idea has its critics. Air-traffic-control problems, a lack of pilots and engineers, high crew costs and landing fees and the well-touted vision of overcrowded skies have all been described as potential major stumbling blocks. Not to mention the question of whether there will be enough interest from the target audience to make it financially viable.

The success of VLJ charter operations, and 'air-taxi' services in particular, will depend on changing customer perceptions of private jet travel, as well as luring traditional first- and business-class passengers away from airlines and other modes of transport. Concerns over security and airport congestion may also offer

a helping hand in this, especially as queues and delays continue to lengthen in response to increasing passenger demand for air travel.

What is certain is that the development of these aircraft will play a significant role in opening up the private aviation industry to a whole host of new individuals, who have never before considered private charter to be within their realms of possibility.

As one of the most experienced charter operators, PrivatAir offers a helping hand to this new generation of would-be passengers. As well as being the owner and operator of one of the largest managed charter fleets in the world – from light jets, such as the Cessna Citation, to Boeing Business Jets and VIP-configured executive airliners – PrivatAir has also carved out a significant niche for itself as a broker of other aircraft.

Working together with its network of 'best-in-class' partner operators, PrivatAir can provide charter of almost any aircraft type, from today's smallest VLJ to the largest luxury airliners available. Needless to say, all aircraft chartered through its network of specialist partners are maintained and operated to the same meticulously high standards as one would expect from PrivatAir. We simply wouldn't accept anything less. ■