

THIS BIRD TOOK FLIGHT OVER 50 YEARS AGO

ASCENT: From the time the American aviator Charles Lindbergh quipped "I've found the bird", the Falcon has come a long way

D ASSAULT FALCON IS responsible for selling and supporting Falcon business jets throughout the world. The reason 2013 is important for the company is that Falcon is celebrating 50 years of its existence this year. In fact, five decades ago, Dassault conceived and launched the Mystère-Falcon 20 - its first true purpose-built business jet. Twenty different models followed in the years since, each with the same sleek lines, smooth handling, and reliability and efficiency inherent in that first Falcon.

Today, more than 2,250 Falcons have been delivered to 82 countries around the world and the fleet has surpassed 16.2 million hours of flight time - testimony to the reputation for quality and performance that the Falcon family has acquired within the aviation community.

But do numbers alone convey the breadth and depth of that reputation? Business aviation operators say they are attracted to Falcon by the passion for excellence that the Falcon brand represents. John Rosanvallon, president and CEO, Dassault Falcon Jet, says, "Our company has always been a leader in this industry and we will continue to set the pace in the years ahead. Moreover, the best is yet to come."

In 1963 when based on technologies designed for the Mystère IV fighter and bearing more resemblance to an airliner than to an executive aircraft, the Mystère 20 rolled off the assembly line in Bordeaux-Mérignac, France, on April 1, 1963. The story goes that the Pan Am delegation headed by American aviator Charles Lindbergh, beside Mystère 20 prototype on May 4, 1963, just before maiden flight, was asked by Pan Am CEO Juan Trippe to find the right aircraft to equip Pan Am's new executive aviation division. Lindbergh quickly wired back:



"I've found the bird."

Then, on June 10, 1965, test pilot Jacqueline Auriol set a new world speed record on the Falcon, flying the first production Mystère 20 at a speed of 859 kmph. Later, in 1971, FedEx founder Frederick Smith selected the Mystère 20 - rebaptised the Falcon 20 - as the basis for his then-fledgling overnight freight service. And in 1972, Pan Am and Dassault set up a joint venture, Falcon Jet Corporation, to market and support Falcon aircraft sold in the Western Hemisphere and other overseas markets. Dassault later bought out Pan Am's share and changed the company's name to Dassault Falcon Jet.

Later, on March 4, 1993, the Falcon 2000 flew for the first time and became the first executive aircraft to be designed by computer. It was conceived to meet

operator demand for a transcontinental business jet combining superior performance and cabin comfort with low operating costs.

In the 21st century, the first flight of EASy-equipped Falcon 900EX was organised. Developed in partnership with Honeywell, EASy (Enhanced Avionics System) is designed to enhance safety by simplifying flight management tasks, improving crew coordination and ensuring optimal situational awareness at all times.

In 2009, the 2000th Falcon jet was handed over to Koç Holding of Turkey. In 2011, Falcon 2000S arrived that offered a sleek, elegant cabin crafted in collaboration with BMW Group Designworks USA.

Coming to the India market, while Dassault built its reputation for advanced high-performance aircraft in the region with the Indian Air Force, this

reputation for design excellence is now increasingly driven by advanced business aircraft like the Falcon 7X, the Falcon 900LX and the Falcon 2000 family. It must be added here that the performance of the Falcon fleet is well suited to Indian operating conditions, where short airfields, elevated runways and high temperatures are common. The Falcon 2000 series has been in particularly strong demand because of its large cabin, exceptional flexibility, low operating costs and range.

Despite the current challenging environment, Dassault is optimistic about India. The company has close to 60% market share in the high-end segment for private jets in India. The company has also sold more than 30 Falcons so far in the country. It must be added here that Dassault has a long established

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presence in India thanks to its military sales to the country, which started more than 50 years ago.

On the growth outlook for the next decade, the company believes that there are already more than 100 non-scheduled aviation operators in India and the number is growing at a strong pace. Dassault believes that India can see sales of over 100 Falcon jets within this decade. In anticipation of this growth, the company is continuing to increase its efforts locally to ensure its operators benefit from a premium customer support network. Some two years ago the company approved Air Works in Mumbai as a Falcon authorised line service in Mumbai. Three other company service centres are already there in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore.

Among the best suited aircraft for India are the 7X and the 2000S. In fact, the Falcon 2000 is Dassault's best seller in the Indian market because of its large cabin, its remarkable versatility and its economy. Now, the company believes that the new 3,250 nm (6,000 km) Falcon 2000S will certainly be of great interest to Indian customers who are more concerned by aircraft agility, short-field performance and purchase price. Then, the Falcon 7X is very popular in the region thanks to its extra long range of 5,950 nm (11,000 km) and its advanced technology. In fact, the Falcon 7X is the only jet in its category to be approved to operate at the challenging London City Airport (with its stringent requirements - steep approach, noise and emission levels) located in the heart of the financial district. The 7X can reach this airport non-stop from any city in India.

In fact, Falcon has come a long way in India since the first Falcon, a Falcon 2000, was delivered to a division of the Tata Group in 1995.