

# FALCONER

THE DASSAULT FALCON FAMILY MAGAZINE



“OUR WORLD-CLASS RESPONSE AND SUPPORT IS THE CULMINATION OF YEARS OF REFINEMENT, PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS, SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENTS AND LISTENING TO OUR CUSTOMERS.”

JEAN KAYANAKIS  
SENIOR VP OF WORLDWIDE  
FALCON CUSTOMER SERVICE & SERVICE CENTER NETWORK

P.13 “TO THE RESCUE”



#### ON THE COVER

The Falcon 6X will feature the largest cabin cross section in business aviation.

#### ISSUE 51 PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

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## PREAMBLE

I am proud to present the latest edition of *Falconer*. As we all know, 2020 has been an unusual year with challenges that have been impossible to anticipate. Working together to create innovative solutions under pressure has been a theme that not only arose in this issue of *Falconer*, but I am also proud to say is a hallmark of our corporate culture.

We have kept our Falcon 6X program on schedule during the pandemic, as you'll read about in "On Track". And while keeping our word to our present and future customers is critical, we've not forgotten about the communities around us. Dassault Aviation led numerous COVID relief flights that transported both medical teams and critical supplies to affected areas, as you'll read about in "Operation Resilience".

In "To the Rescue" you'll climb aboard our Falcon Response aircraft and journey with our AOG team to fix a Falcon in distress (and yes, the customer made their mission on time). The can-do attitude of our global customer support team is just one reason why we once again placed #1 in the AIN Customer Support Survey this year.

Planet 9 is our guest in this issue's Customer Profile. The successful charter company started with an all-Falcon 7X fleet and today provides bespoke service for discerning customers.

Finally, we speak with Philippe Duchateau, Flight Crew Director for Dassault Aviation in "Perspectives", and we visit Switzerland's famed watchmaking region, La Chaux-de-Fonds, in "Stopover".

Welcome aboard!

Eric Trappier  
Chairman & CEO  
Dassault Aviation

# FALCONER

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Aviation has a history of lending itself to the common good. Dassault played a small part in the effort to bring professionals and critical supplies to the areas hit hardest by the pandemic.

# On Track

Dassault Rolls Out **Falcon 6X** -- Advances Toward First Flight.

*Dassault Aviation recently rolled out the Falcon 6X and is making steady progress toward an early 2021 planned first flight for its latest and roomiest aircraft.*

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BY ANDREW PONZONI

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*“Bringing the Falcon 6X to market on schedule is a top priority for the company,” said Dassault Aviation Chairman and CEO Eric Trappier. “Our suppliers have also made extraordinary efforts to support us. We are grateful to them all.”*

The first of three pre-production aircraft that will take part in flight certification has been powered up and has entered ground testing. Aircraft no. 2 and 3 are in advanced stages of assembly and long cycle parts production for serialized production has already begun. Certification and entry into service are set for 2022, in keeping with the original timetable.

The second aircraft recently had its wings mated to the fuselage and the third aircraft is in the early stages of final assembly. Each will be capable of performing aerodynamic, performance and systems testing.

Aircraft no. 3 will receive a full interior to evaluate systems functionality, acoustics, airflow, comfort and other factors. Interior furnishings, environmental systems, electronics and other equipment are currently being tested in a ground test rig prior to installation on the aircraft.



Electric, hydraulic and fuel system tests have been completed and testing of the Falcon 6X's advanced Digital Flight Control System (DFCS) has begun. Ground fatigue and damage tolerance testing has also been initiated. This test cycle will later be extended to include stress testing to maximum load limits and beyond.

The Falcon 6X sets a new industry benchmark for cabin comfort, long-range performance and flying efficiency. It offers the largest cabin cross section of any purpose-built business jet (6'6" tall by 8'6" wide) and its 5,500 nautical mile range capability allows it to connect far flung routes such as Paris to Tokyo or Los Angeles to Moscow.

The new twinjet is also equipped with the latest innovative technologies, including a new-generation Digital Flight Control System that provides unmatched maneuverability in flight. The new DFCS controls all moving surfaces including a new multifunction control area called a flaperon, adapted from Dassault fighter aircraft.

## PW812D ENGINE PROGRAM ON TARGET

Assembly of Falcon 6X engines and nacelles is ramping up in parallel with aircraft production.

The aircraft's advanced Pratt & Whitney Canada PW812D engine completed an initial airborne test campaign earlier this year aboard Pratt & Whitney's Boeing 747 testbed aircraft and a second series of flight tests during the summer. To date the PW812D has accumulated over 200 hours in the air and more than 1,600 hours on the ground. It has also completed initial certification tests, including bird strike, ice ingestion and blade-off tests.

*"Bringing the Falcon 6X to market on schedule is a top priority for the company," said Dassault Aviation Chairman and CEO Eric Trappier.*

*"Our suppliers have also made extraordinary efforts to support us. We are grateful to them all."*





Falcon  
Response

# TO THE RESCUE

Behind the Scenes on a Real-Life AOG Mission

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BY GRANT KIELCZEWSKI

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The yellow warning light illuminated and the seasoned crew immediately noticed. The potential mechanical problem would mean that the final leg of their mission the following day wouldn't take place until some preventive maintenance was done. That would be a problem for their customer in back, who had chartered the Luxaviation Falcon 7X from France to Florida and was scheduled to fly home the following day. The crew alerted their maintenance director, Albano Constante, who immediately begins coordinating with Dassault's Command Center to start resolving the problem.

Constante, Technical Director for Luxaviation France, has been working on Falcon products for a decade and was very happy with the outcome of the event. "This was one of the most successful responses from Dassault. They made Falcon Airborne Support available from Teterboro," said Mr. Constante who oversees a fleet of six aircraft including four Falcons. "The resolution of the AOG (Aircraft on Ground) on time was only possible due to Falcon Airborne Support and the result of very good coordination between Luxaviation and the Falcon Team. In terms of overall support, Dassault provides the best available. It's been a very good experience."

An AOG situation can mean a missed business opportunity, a lost sale or missing out on significant family events. For companies it might mean the difference between being competitive and profitable or languishing for years to come.

For those who fly on Falcon aircraft, the story can end with a much more positive outcome. Dassault Aviation has invested heavily over the last decade to ensure that in the rare case when a customer does experience an AOG, there are significant resources to solve that problem and ensure the customer gets to their ultimate destination on time. In fact, the Dassault response to an AOG is the gold standard to which every other manufacturer aspires. Dassault has earned the number one spot in the AIN customer support survey two years running, and continues to make investments to sustain and surpass that level of support to customers.

To provide readers of this magazine a behind-the-scenes view of Falcon Customer Support, the editorial team recently rode along and documented the mission that helped Luxaviation France ensure its charter customer arrived home on time.

***"Our world-class response and support is the culmination of years of refinement, process improvements, significant investments and listening to our customers," says Jean Kayanakis, Senior VP of Worldwide Falcon Customer Service & Service Center Network.***

## TETERBORO, NEW JERSEY -- MARCH 10

### 12:30 PM EST

Around noon on March 10, the 7X pilots call the Global Command Center hotline where they are connected with AOG Response Coordinator, Daniel Lynch, located in Teterboro, New Jersey. Daniel starts helping the pilots troubleshoot the problem while also simultaneously looking at solutions like sourcing local parts and finding the closest technicians. "We try to look at the whole picture which includes all the resources available to us to see how we can best help the customer," says Lynch. He makes the decision that the best way to help the customer meet their departure deadline is to dispatch the needed part and technicians via the dedicated Falcon Response aircraft based in Teterboro, NJ. This sets off a highly coordinated chain of events that takes place very rapidly and involves many teams.

### 2:55 PM EST

Having determined the faulty components, Daniel provides the parts list to his counterparts at the Spares Operations Center.

Long-time employee, Karen Orr, knows time is of the essence and within a couple of minutes has quickly keyed the order into the system.

### 3:10 PM EST

Minutes later, warehouse attendant, Dan Sweeney, grabs the Pick Ticket and sets off to retrieve the parts. Although the cavernous warehouse holds over \$300 million in parts, he quickly locates them because of the highly automated sorting and picking systems in place. As an extra measure, the Spares team puts the order through a final quality control check to be sure it's accurate, triple checking the parts numbers and bar codes. Finally, Sweeney hurries the now packed order to the dedicated delivery van and jumps in. By 4:00 PM Dan hand delivers the box to the FBO on the west side of the airport where the Falcon crew loads it into the cargo hold of the Falcon 900 with the now well-known orange and grey paint scheme.





**5:11 PM EST**

With a flight plan already filed thanks to the coordination of the Command Center, Falcon Response pilots Michael McCullough and Keith Alder taxi the aircraft to the runway, receive their clearance and advance the throttle forward. The Falcon 900 rotates at 106 knots and is wheels up at 5:11 PM headed south with parts aboard just two hours after being picked.

**STEWART, FLORIDA -- 7:27 PM EST**

The wheels on the Falcon Response aircraft create small puffs of smoke as it touches down in Stewart, Florida (KVA) at Dassault's satellite service center. As the pilots bring the aircraft to a stop with the engines running, Avionics Technician, Michael Robinson and A&P Technician, George Fuentes board with two large cases of tools for any contingencies that might arise. It's a quick turn and within less than 30 minutes the Falcon 900 is once again wheels up and headed south.

**8:37 PM EST**

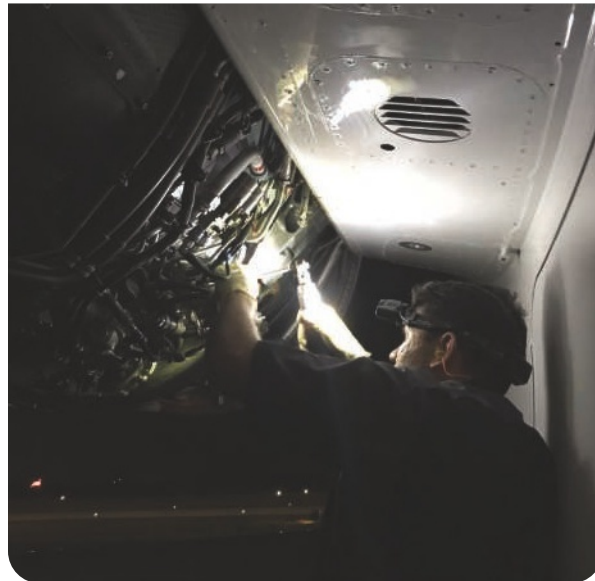
Michael and Keith bring the 900 in for a direct approach to humid Key West (KEYW). With wheels on the ground, the crew taxis across the airport and lines up next to the customer's Falcon 7X. Before the engines are even done spooling down, Michael and George have exited the aircraft and popped the baggage door to retrieve their tools.

**10:00 PM EST**

Although they are mostly working in the dark with head lamps, Michael and George have the engine issue solved by 10:00 PM. A quick run-up ensures that the engine is also operating properly under power. Throughout the entire scenario the customer has been in contact with the Command Center receiving updates from the technicians and Falcon Response pilots on the ground. The customer has another request: can the team take a look at a seat that has been stuck? The answer is of course, yes.

**THE FOLLOWING MORNING -- 10:00 AM EST**

Thanks to the late night work of the technicians, the customer is able to make their scheduled flight from Key West to Miami and then home to Le Bourget airport, in France. The Falcon team stands by as the customer boards their plane and taxis out for takeoff. They want to be sure the customer is successfully airborne before calling the mission a success. All goes well and within minutes the graceful 7X wings north towards Miami.



*"We are extremely proud of the confidence our customers have placed in us as demonstrated by these survey results," said Thierry Betbeze, CEO of Dassault Falcon Jet.*

*"Our customers can be confident that we will continue to exceed their expectations and improve support no matter where they travel on the globe."*

**ALL IN A DAY'S WORK**

Dassault's worldwide customer support network includes service centers, field technical reps, spares parts depots, AOG GoTeams and two dedicated Falcon 900s to assist customers in any hemisphere. And in the cases where they cannot fix the problem in time for the customer's flight, the Falcon 900s have VIP interiors for alternative lift – an industry first.

"Our world-class response and support is the culmination of years of refinement, process improvements, significant investments and listening to our customers," says Jean Kayanakis, Senior VP of Worldwide Falcon Customer Service & Service Center Network. And indeed, although the customer support organization is proud of their coveted number one position, they are always looking towards new improvements to help make a Falcon customer's experience the very best in the industry.





What could be better than operating a growing fleet of Falcon 7X ultra-long-range business jets all around the globe, all while working with a team of great people you respect and enjoy? That's the business plan behind California-based Planet Nine.

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## OPERATOR PROFILE

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BY MARK PHELPS

Co-founders Matt Walter, Director of Business Development and James Seagrim, Director of Operations, met during their early days of involvement with business aviation and have been “best friends” for 20 years. They formed Planet Nine about two years ago with the idea of assembling an employee-centric workforce around an airplane they both recognize as a superior product—in so many ways.

After being involved with a number of different charter-business scenarios, Walter and Seagrim, along with chief pilot Harvey Underwood and the rest of the management team, have built their operation around the distinct advantages of the Falcon 7X. They recognized that its trijet configuration, reliability, ultra-efficient performance, and markedly smooth fly-by-wire ride give the 7X distinct advantages in international operations. Largely underappreciated in the charter role, the Falcon 7X is making waves thanks to Planet Nine, when it comes to competing in the ultra-long-range charter market. “With five Falcons, we’ve elbowed our way into the conversation,” said Walter, who focuses on the sales side of the business.

Planet Nine’s Falcon fleet is wholly owned and dedicated solely to charter, an arrangement that is a bit unusual, at least in the North American charter landscape. Most operators rely on aircraft that they manage, but that are owned by a third party and chartered on the operator’s certificate as a means of offsetting fixed operating costs during times the owners are not flying. Planet Nine does have that service available as part of its portfolio (and recommends owners of Falcons to partake of that service), but the Falcon 7X fleet is 100 percent dedicated to charter, and to Seagrim, that offers some unique advantages.

PLANET  
PRIVATE AIR





“With charter/managed aircraft, there can be owner permission issues. Also, some pilots of managed aircraft can be vulnerable to the attitude that, ‘It’s not my boss in the back.’ So it’s like someone renting a room. But with our own Falcons and our own pilots and company-trained flight attendants, we get to control the product a lot more. It’s like having a mini-CEO in the front of the aircraft making sure the passengers get the best product.”

This dedication to customer service is founded in professional pride, but has a grounding in good business. Keeping the customer satisfied is critical to return and word-of-mouth new business, Seagrim said, adding, “There’s a very small number of clients who can afford to fly these \$100,000 to \$250,000 trips. So each client really counts.”

Many of the complex trips that Planet Nine flies can only be completed with a Falcon, staking out a valuable niche market. Walter said, “When we put pen to paper on the business model, from the standpoint of capability and efficiency, we’re operating at a 33 percent advantage in fuel burn compared to [other manufacturers’] aircraft in the same category. We’ve also been able to get our customers into challenging airports [much nearer their final destination] and connect city pairs—like Aspen to Moscow—that you couldn’t dream of doing with another aircraft.”

Rules surrounding multi-engine overwater flight planning also favor the three-engine Falcon. Seagrim explains, “You’ve got to be within 180 minutes of the closest ‘suitable landing spot.’ With a two-engine aircraft, that would be a much shorter distance, because you are going to slow down substantially on one engine. On the Falcon, if you lose one engine, you don’t lose airspeed. That allows us to link islands in the Pacific, say, that couldn’t be done with a two-engine business jet.”

Fuel efficiency has another marketing advantage for Planet Nine. “Yes, the lower fuel burn affects our bottom line,” Walter said, “but also, a lot of our clients are very environmentally conscious. Lower carbon footprint and reduced fuel burn is very appealing to them. I have corporate accounts who want to know what the fuel burn is before asking the cost of a trip. It’s a direction that has been trending for a long time now.”

As an active Planet Nine Falcon pilot, Seagrim adds more reasons for loving the 7X. “The digital flight control system is very good—such a nice ride! It’s amazing how many people come off of the Falcon—especially those from the West Coast who have been used to flying on other ultra-long-range jets. They get on this Falcon and they’re shocked at how nice the ride is. How quiet it is.”



“The digital flight control system is very good—such a nice ride! It’s amazing how many people come off of the Falcon—especially those from the West Coast who have been used to flying on other ultra-long-range jets. They get on this Falcon and they’re shocked at how nice the ride is. How quiet it is.”

Dispatch reliability and Dassault Aviation's award-winning customer support [topping AIN Publications' 2020 customer support survey for the second consecutive year] is another strong suit. Walter explained, "In the first year and a half, we were flying 85 hours per month per aircraft. You can't do that without great support. They were always right there, to expedite a part or send out a go-team, if needed. They've been a key component to our success."

Seagrim seconds the praise for the 7X's dispatch reliability. "At 1,000 hours per year per aircraft, over two years, we've had only two AOGs [Aircraft on Ground situations]. That's unheard of." And in each case, either parts or maintenance teams were on site in time to meet the customers' schedules. "And Falcon Broadcast, it's excellent software that can predict maintenance issues in flight. If a potential AOG situation arises, we can have the parts shipped to our destination airport swiftly, so maintenance can be performed promptly."



"Do you know one of the biggest things—if I'm rambling tell me to stop. It's the quality of the cabin interior. These Falcons! They're built like tanks! Really well engineered. I got on one of our older aircraft—it's done 3,000 hours of charter—and [chuckle] even the woodwork is good as new. Everything is operating great. You just don't find that with other business jets."

Once he gets going on the topic, Seagrim wants to keep on praising the quality control of the Falcon line. "Do you know one of the biggest things—if I'm rambling tell me to stop. It's the quality of the cabin interior. These Falcons! They're built like tanks! Really well engineered. I got on one of our older aircraft—it's done 3,000 hours of charter—and [chuckle] even the woodwork is good as new. Everything is operating great. You just don't find that with other business jets."

Walter agrees: "All our aircraft are on Dassault's FalconCare program, including inspections. We're very happy with that insurance." He also talked about how supportive Dassault Falcon was when the company was first acquiring its 7Xs. "Early on, they sent a high-level management team out to our headquarters in Van Nuys, met with our maintenance team, and set us up for success. Our team got to see how they work and we got to see how they work, preventing any stumbling out of the gate for us. They showed their commitment to the success of Planet Nine."

Falcons have long been renowned as "a pilot's airplane," and Planet Nine set itself up as a pilot-friendly company. For many years, the gold standard in corporate flying jobs has been a position with a private owner-operator. But that can lead to lots of lost weekends and not much of a life outside the cockpit. "I attack this from a different dimension," said Seagrim. "As a pilot myself, I put in a crewing structure that gave crews hard days off. That allowed me to get a better quality pilot, and to get pilots who would be charter-friendly. They come to us because of the schedule. Also, with that schedule, I don't need to hire pilots who live in LA or New York. They can live where they want to. It's the kind of company I'd like to work for."

All of that supports a three-legged clientele for Planet Nine—ad hoc "retail" charter; "wholesale" charter serving the worldwide brokerage market; and block-hour agreements serving 100- to 1,000-hour per year customers within a practical range of the company's four operating hubs in Los Angeles, New York, London, and Dubai. "For example," Walter said, "Miami is easily within range of New York; and we can easily serve our customers throughout Europe from the London office."

For Planet Nine, the future holds the promise of further growth. For its customers, the Falcon 7X fleet promises an unmatched experience in ultra-long-range private flying.

# OPERATION

BY MARK PHELPS

More than a century ago in 1914, the highest-technology form of transportation in Europe was the taxicab. At the very start of World War I, with German forces quickly closing in on Paris, a fleet of taxis mobilized to transport French troops some 26 miles eastward to the front lines at the Marne River. The so-called “Taxis of the Marne” became a national symbol of modern transportation coming to the rescue in a crisis.

Similarly, business aviation around the world has responded to the challenge of the coronavirus pandemic. With their fuel efficiency and performance, Falcons are ideally suited for a wide range of relief missions. For example, a Falcon owner (who prefers to remain anonymous) bought a planeload of respirators in Taiwan and flew them in his Falcon 7X to New York, where he donated them to help fight the virus.

Dassault, itself, has also done its part to serve the common good around the world.

On March 25, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the launch of Operation Resilience, in which the Defence Ministry

was mobilized to assist in combating the spread of the deadly virus. “Operation Resilience will be wholly dedicated to the help and support of the public as well as support for public services in tackling the Covid-19 epidemic at home and abroad, particularly in health, logistics and protection,” he said.

Dassault Aviation promptly responded, making a company-owned Falcon 8X and 900 (the latter one of two FalconResponse AOG airplanes) available to the Ministry. On April 5, the two aircraft completed their first mission, returning a team of 26 doctors and other personnel from Brest, Brittany, to their home base in Paris after deploying for an emergency evacuation mission. The two trijets are operated by Dassault Falcon Service (DFS), the Le Bourget Airport-based Dassault subsidiary that conducts flight operations and maintenance.

In the following weeks, the Falcons would fly several more missions for Operation Resilience, many involving long-range intercontinental flights that took best advantage of the trijets’ mission flexibility.

# RESILIENCE

Just as was the case a century ago with the German invasion during World War I, the eastern region of France was hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, while the southern regions remain relatively less affected. In cities such as Strasbourg, Mulhouse, and even Paris, hospitals and medical personnel were quickly overwhelmed by the avalanche of Covid-19 patients. Volunteers from the quieter regions were anxious to reach out to help. But 10 hours’ travel time by train or car made it impractical for many to come to the aid of their exhausted colleagues.

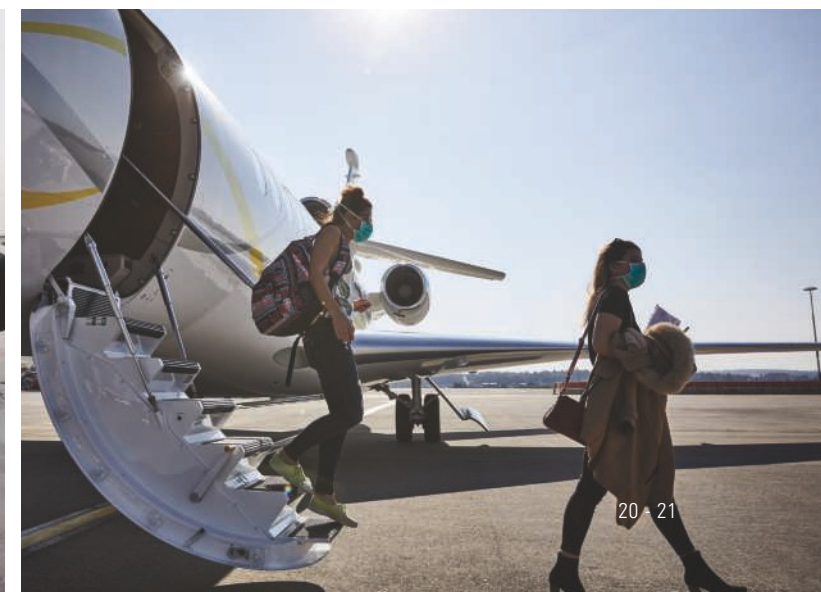
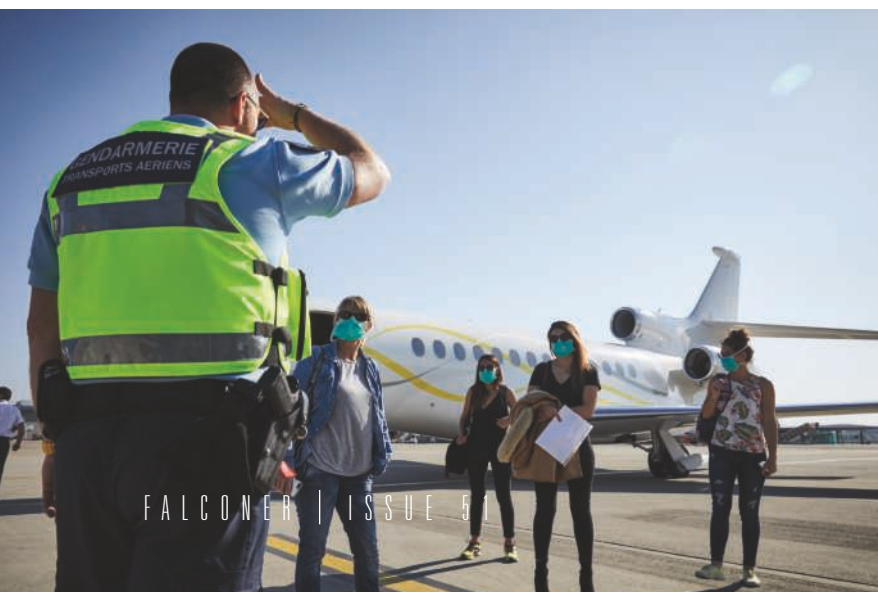
Dassault made a pair of company-owned Falcon trijets available—a 7X and 8X—to serve a volunteer effort launched by Aviation Sans Frontières (ASF, or Aviation Without Borders), involving a diverse fleet of volunteer airplanes. These ranged from four-seat, piston-powered Cirrus SR22s to the intercontinental 8X and 7X, as well as some operated by Falcon Jet customers. With so much of France’s airline service grounded and surface transportation hobbled, the general aviation fleet stepped up to transport on-demand and emergency medical professionals and equipment. In all, the volunteer fleet flew a total of more than 435 flight hours on more than 300 sorties.

On one of its typical missions, the Falcon 8X departed from Paris Le Bourget Airport to return a group of tired volunteer medical workers home to Agen in southwest France. The Falcon picked up more volunteers in Agen, then flew on to Montpellier to pick up more medical workers before flying on to Mulhouse where the assistance was desperately needed—all in less than half a day.

Dassault Falcon Service, the ground-handling business segment of the company’s aviation sector, waived all charges for servicing all the ASF aircraft, while fuel was donated from supplier Total, and all fuel taxes were waived by the French government.

Besides the heroic effort on the part of Dassault’s Aviation business unit, Dassault Group has also converted segments of its production facilities to produce protective visors, using additive manufacturing (3D printing) technology.

The company also donated food for hospital medical staff in Saint-Cloud, contributed 130,000 protective masks, and its parent company (the Dassault Group) donated 2 million euros to Parisian hospitals to help combat the Covid-19 pandemic.





# PHILIPPE DUCHATEAU

IN THE HOT SEAT WITH PHILIPPE 'DUCH' DUCHATEAU

## PERSPECTIVES

BY JESSICA BUEL

Philippe Duchateau was born to fly. As a child, Dassault Aviation's chief test pilot traveled to airshows near his home in Belgium and dreamed of piloting the F15s, F16s, Mirages and SR 71 Blackbirds he saw there. The call of the skies was so strong that, as a teenager, Duchateau would even hitchhike to the U.S. Air Force base in Chièvres to watch the military planes. All the while, rumblings of a future test pilot career took hold of his soul.

As a member of the French Air Force and now as flight crew director for Dassault Aviation, Duchateau has made good on those dreams, flying Falcons and fighters for a living.

"I really wanted to become a fighter pilot, so when I joined the Air Force, I was so happy," Duchateau said. "Becoming a test pilot was already hiding somewhere in my head, but you know, you don't want to say that early in the process when you are just a rookie."

Yet Duchateau's career has not suffered for a lack of bravado. If his curriculum vitae reads like a string of test pilot dream jobs, then Duchateau's shift to a civilian career has been equally seamless.

Duchateau estimates he logs roughly 300 flight hours per year, of which 100 are in military aircraft and 200 in Falcons. Most of his time is spent at Dassault's facility in Istres, where his

work consists of test flights that cover all aspects of envelope expansion and software improvements, he said.

"We fly some demo trips for potential customers, and this is very interesting, since we get feedback about the way to improve our products. This is a competitive market, and we really have to keep at the top."

He said working with his Dassault colleagues and clients keeps him problem solving. It is the marriage of flight experience, engineering expertise and curiosity, and it has catapulted Duchateau to the top of his field. Competition in business aviation may be fierce, but this veteran is not one to shy away from a challenge.

Duchateau has seen his share of the competitive market. A recent delivery of Rafale fighters to India's defense minister emblazoned Duchateau's image over internet news services last year. The test flight, piloted by Duchateau, received considerable press, as it marked the purchase of 36 Rafale jets by the Indian Air Force.

This life-long aerialist and Dassault received kudos for the "comfortable and smooth" flight at supersonic speed, a feat that comes artlessly to one of the foremost test pilots of the French fighter jet.

"Most of the time you're very busy doing your job and trying to be up to the challenge, so you don't realize much," Duchateau said, describing the feeling of piloting a fighter jet. "But sometimes, you manage to just sit back a little bit, relax, like coming out of your body and watching from above, and then it is just outstanding. It is like a 'Waaaouh' effect – incredible acceleration, sharpness, precision, a lot of Gs and at low level — the real feel of pure speed."

## THE MAKING OF A TEST PILOT AND AVIATION HERITAGE

A seasoned veteran of aeronautics, Duchateau received his engineering degree at the French Air Force Academy (the Ecole de l'Air) and trained at L'EPNER, the French test pilot school. He spent 19 years as a fighter pilot, test pilot and Mirage 2000D squadron commander in the French Air Force. In 2005, Dassault Aviation's Chief Test Pilot, Bill Kerherve, contacted Duchateau to query him about an open position at Dassault.

Duchateau flew Dassault Mirages and British-made Tornados during a three-year exchange tour with the Royal Air Force, but he knew that as a lieutenant-colonel, his next air force promotion would land him squarely in a desk job.

"The Dassault offer was the only way to keep my pants in the hot seat!" Duchateau joked. And with that same esprit de corps, he has spent the last 15 years at Dassault helping others pursue their passion for flight.

Duch, as he is known to his friends, manages an aircrew of about 40 pilots. Some are test pilots, like himself, while others are ex-military instructors or business aviation experts based at Le Bourget. The crew has close ties with Dassault Falcon Jet pilots, as well, said Duchateau.



"It's a very big family, and we are all very proud to be a part of Dassault's incredible aviation heritage," Duchateau said. "What I like best about working at Dassault — apart from the jets, of course — are the people. So many of them are brilliant, humble and passionate ... be they fellow test pilots, flight engineers, crew members, or customers."

Working as a display pilot has offered Duchateau the opportunity to learn from the Dassault legacy and to pass along his own knowledge to a new generation. Fighter jet display flights last only a few minutes and must show the full range of an aircraft's motion and capabilities. Although Rafale air shows are now the domain of the French Air Force, Duchateau's training has forever marked his approach to life and business.

## FROM MACH 2 TO FAMILY MAN

The theater of business aviation showcases a different set of know-how and aplomb, but Duchateau has found a comfortable compromise between his role as a showman and that of a manager. It seems the Rafale's "flight and forget" training has readied this maverick for more tranquil pursuits, as well.

While taking flight is one of the Dassault employment perks, Duchateau said his most difficult and thrilling responsibility is that of hiring and building the best possible team spirit.

"Technically speaking, most of the available test pilots are up to the job. The hard bit is finding humble, open-minded and sociable people, with inquiring minds," Duchateau said. "Our flight crew members must also have the capacity to ask themselves probing questions. This is no place for daredevils, lesson-givers or stubborn individuals with intangible technical opinions."

But Duchateau is no stranger to managing a crew. As a father to four girls, he said he specializes in "air-to-air radar" – a holdover from his early career training on Cold War era jets.

"My spouse, Eva, is a great antique jewelry dealer, so at least not everybody is speaking about aviation in my home, Duchateau joked. Nevertheless, the members of this family are no strangers to flight.

Duchateau's home flying machine is a Cirrus SR20. This is the craft Duchateau prefers when traveling with his family. But his pride and joy is his 1943 Boeing Stearman biplane.

"It is perfect for gentle aerobatics and hair-raising landings, especially on concrete runways with a little bit of crosswind," Duchateau said.

It's hard to imagine Duchateau ever staying still for too long, but after a lifetime of loops and barrel rolls, it seems he has found his soft landing.

# LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS

ESCAPE TO “WATCH VALLEY”



## STOPOVER

BY KRISTIN MAJCHER

Ready to fly into the most worldly city you’ve never heard of? The pine-filled mountains, sparkling blue lakes and verdant farmland surrounding Switzerland’s Les Eplatures Airport may signal that you’re descending into an anonymous small town. But La Chaux-de-Fonds is anything but. This city of about 37,000 people in the French-speaking Neuchâtel region should be high on your list for a next trip—and not only because it sits at 1,000 meters above sea level and claims the highest international IFR airport in Europe. La Chaux-de-Fonds’ impressive contributions to architecture, innovation and luxury goods have swept the globe. And yet, this destination maintains a quaint, unhurried vibe that transports visitors back in time. Here’s how to make the most of your visit.

## TIME-HONORED TRADITION

If your most loyal co-pilot is a chronograph that never leaves your wrist, thank La Chaux-de-Fonds for playing a key role in the development of these ultra-precise timepieces. This Swiss city wasn’t just influenced by watchmaking, though—it was built for it. Nearly every aspect of the city was planned with the industry

in mind, helping to propel now-famous brands like Breitling and TAG Heuer to international acclaim. The area continues to serve as an important site for these big-name watch manufacturers today.

After a 1794 fire ravaged much of the area, planner Charles-Henri Junod drew up blueprints to transform La Chaux-de-Fonds into a dedicated watchmaking hub. He did the same with neighboring Le Locle, and this historically-important approach to planning landed both locations on UNESCO’s prestigious list of World Heritage sites in 2009.

Take a stroll through the city center to appreciate how these details come together, including the “checkerboard” grid of wide streets best admired from the 14th-floor observatory of the circular Espacité Tower. You’ll also notice that the south-facing buildings tend to feature gardens, which helped to illuminate watchmakers’ workspaces throughout the day. Stop into the Espace de l’urbanisme horloger information center to learn more about the philosophy behind the town’s design, and then check out some antique timepieces at the Musée International d’horlogerie (International Watchmaking Museum). The building is filled to the brim with thousands of time-related treasures, such as a mesmerizing planetarium by Swiss watchmaker Francois Ducommun. Finally, wrap up your whirlwind watchmaking course by requesting a tour of the Corum factory, which provides a firsthand look at how these time-honored traditions have influenced modern-day wrist candy.



Turque, built in 1917 and now owned by luxury watch brand Ebel. Art lovers will also appreciate that La Chaux-de-Fonds developed its own flavor of Art Nouveau known as the “Pine Tree Style,” influenced by the surrounding Jura mountains.

## WHERE TO UNWIND

After a day browsing antique luxury watches, consider unwinding in a place that shares an equally luxe aesthetic. Treat yourself by booking a room at the four-star Grand Hôtel les Endroits, situated right in La Chaux-de-Fonds and just a five-minute drive away from the airport. The modern hotel boasts a seven-room sauna circuit and pools to recharge after a long day of sightseeing or exploring the breathtaking Jura mountains on a pair of cross-country skis. Gourmet, the hotel’s on-site restaurant, is Michelin Guide-approved and serves up classics like hearty steaks, risotto and Swiss perch filets. But if you prefer a meal paired with a rustic twist, consider a short road trip to one of the region’s more than 70 unique farmhouse restaurants. A solid pick close to town is the quaint Buvette le Maillard, which beckons diners to cozy up inside with a steaming pot of fondue or savor a glass of local wine on the patio in warmer months.



## WORLDLY CONTRIBUTIONS

La Chaux-de-Fonds also prides itself on being the birthplace of residents who have influenced the world in meaningful ways. These include automobile legend Louis Chevrolet, poet Frédéric-Louis Sauter (pen name Blaise Cendrars) and architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris (better known as Le Corbusier). To see how these hometown heroes left their mark, locate the silvery, abstract sculpture honoring Chevrolet’s 100-year anniversary and then swing by two properties designed by Le Corbusier. The Maison Blanche, a 1912 house the architect designed for his parents, had a style that broke with tradition at the time and is considered his first independent work. Another must-see is the ornate Villa

## IF YOU GO

All Falcon-family aircraft can operate at Les Eplatures Airport, perched 3,336 feet above sea level with an asphalt runway measuring 3,576 feet by 88.6 feet. The airport is located 1.8 miles to the southwest of downtown La Chaux-de-Fonds, which is less than a 10-minute drive from the runway. Handling services can be arranged through Universal’s Tango Team, reachable at +1 (713) 378-2763. The airport is open from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. Make sure to stay within Swiss airspace on the approach.

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# PHOTO CONTEST

## MOONSHOT

BY GIUSEPPE NARGINO



*This photo of a Falcon 50EX landing in Milano-Linate (Italy) was taken by Mr. Giuseppe Nargino using a Canon PowerShot SX540 (F 6.5, 1/1600 shutter speed, at ISO 1250).*

### **ENTRY DETAILS & PRIZE INFORMATION:**

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To enter your photo, e-mail the above address with a high-resolution JPG or PNG file and include the following: your name and contact information; date and location of photo; equipment used (including lens); and settings such as F-stop, ISO speed and shutter speed (if appropriate). The submission of your photograph implies the legal right of Falconer magazine to utilize the image in our publication. Winners are determined by the editorial staff of the magazine and the award is offered to the actual photographer of the picture.