CHARTING A CONTROLLED GROWTH

Jinggong Global Jet recently attended its third ABACE in Shanghai, with a Chinese AOC under its belt; a new aircraft on the static display, another about to arrive and the launch of a new website. Here Franck Dubarry, CEO, talks about the challenges and triumphs of the first year.

By Jill Stockbridge

The joint venture Jinggong Global Jet, officially launched in November last year, blends together the best in European and Asian expertise, Swiss international aviation services provider Global Jet has joined with one of China’s top-500 companies, the Jinggong Group, to offer a range of aircraft charter and management services. The company is based in Hangzhou Xiaoshan International Airport and is led by industry veteran Franck Dubarry, CEO, and Margaret Ma, Chairman, a long-term Jinggong Group executive. Dubarry spoke to Altitudes Asia about the company’s formation, a frantic first year and the future.

Altitudes Asia: How many aircraft do you currently have operating under Jinggong Global Jet?

Franck Dubarry: In China the regulations are strict and intense. Entering an aircraft requires more resources and training than any European operator has seen so far. However, it is for a good reason. Chinese Authorities want to make sure that the operations are conducted safely and therefore a strict auditing and training programme is in place. It goes without saying that we as a ‘new’ operator in this part of the world are looked at even more.

Jinggong Global Jet is entering its Falcon 5000EX EASY in June. We then have a Falcon 7X in line, that is due to arrive in July. Of course, we are looking forward to expanding our current organisation. We have highly motivated people and the office is ready to handle at least five more aircraft this year.

AA: Are these aircraft owned by the company or managed on behalf of clients?

FD: We tend to keep all our operations very confidential, so the same goes for these aircraft. What we can say is that the Falcon 900EX is very flexible and the ‘owner’ is motivated to have charter flights, so we have the right tool to work with and a dedicated crew to make our future passengers entirely satisfied.

We have based our business model on that of Global Jet in Europe. We are very clear and our clients know what they have to pay and why. The Jinggong Global Jet product will turn around the security and the services to
same company goals since the beginning.

AA: You now have your AOC in China, what difference does it make to be in mainland China?

FD: We are the only European operator who has a partnership with a Chinese company in order to create a new kind of business and it has given us great advantages. We have a Chinese Mainland AOC and approved operations. The difference is that we can now legally perform charter flights. We can operate to airports where we could not operate with the Global Jet fleet. We have the local contacts now to serve our clients better and also perform better as a company in the region.

Around 90% of our staff is Chinese. The difference is very clear. We no longer have the cultural differences, the language barriers and with our AOC we have fewer restrictions from the aviation authorities.

AA: How long did it take to get the AOC and what were the challenges?

FD: We received our business licence for the joint venture in November 2015 and we will receive our final new (updated) AOC in June 2016. I am very proud of my team of managers, as it was a real challenge to obtain the AOC in such a short period!

We respect the culture and the rules that apply in China. We have established a good relationship with the CAAC and have earned their trust.

AA: Why are you based in Hangzhou and what difference does it make to your business?

FD: On the one hand, we chose Hangzhou because the general aviation side of the company was already based in Hangzhou. Business aviation is very new to the region, so there is great development potential. It is the political and business centre of the region, with a high density of large corporations close by. It is also right in the middle of China, allowing easy access to Hong Kong, Macau, Beijing, Shanghai or Chengdu.

On the other hand, Hangzhou is also one of the most well-known cities throughout Asia. Thanks to their strategic destinations, which serve most of the cities of Asia, and thanks to its wonderful culture and stunning landscapes, it is one of the most popular tourism destinations in the world.

In the end, for the aircraft it does not matter. We will start with Hangzhou as our home base, but we intend to be flexible and not restrict ourselves. Logically, the clients will decide at the end where we will or should place the aircraft. This is the great advantage of our establishment. We have a global attitude, which will help a lot.

AA: What has Jinggong Global Jet introduced from Europe that makes the service offered different to others in Asia?

FD: Global Jet has operated quite a significant fleet of aircraft in this region for more than 10 years, so our clients are already familiar with our high service level. It is an expectation now and we are sure this will only grow.

Our charter operation has been adjusted to the region. In the past year, we have intensively adjusted our crew training to fine-tune the service we provide. Along with the best of service standards from our European tradition, we have introduced the local particularities and wishes of our clients and taken a deep look into Chinese culture to make sure we respect all of it and offer a truly exceptional experience to our Chinese clients. This goes from very large to the tiniest details.

AA: What have you learned from the Asian way of doing things that has been a difference for you?

FD: We have learned a lot while creating the company, but of course a lot was known already. Global Jet has been operating in China for over 10 years and has noticed also the positive move with regards to the business jet growth. The country has become more accessible and with many new airports being constructed, rebuilt or improved. There is a bright future here in China.

The way business is conducted is different from Europe. The style, the meetings, the culture plays a tremendously important role here. We have learned to adjust the company, the people and the training to this.

AA: How do you and Margaret Mo work together - what do you bring to the relationship?

FD: It is teamwork and only together can we be successful. We need to stand on both legs, so I bring the operational knowledge and the management knowledge of a business jet, and Margaret adds strong knowledge of the Chinese business scene. We are more than happy with the result.

AA: How do you see the market developing in the next five years?

We see a steady growth. Currently the growth is still there. It is less strong than expected a few years ago, but there is still growth. It is only a question of time now and it will go up. The country is developing at such a great speed that the business jet market will follow quickly with major steps.

AA: How do you see Jinggong Global Jet developing in the next five years?

FD: We expect a controllable growth. Already we are preparing for the next aircraft to enter on our AOC and we will take them step by step. Our strength is that we will accept any kind of aircraft. We will always adapt as a company to the client. This is in a way heavier on us as an organisation, but we believe it is the only way to serve the market.