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Piaggio delivers first Canada-based P180 Avanti Evo



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Piaggio Aerospace has delivered the first P180 Avanti Evo to a Canadian owner, with the twin-pusher a former North American customer demonstrator, built by the Italian airframer in 2018.

Windsor, Ontario-based plastics and toilet seat manufacturer Centoco Holding plans to place the Evo (registration N32WC) on an air operator certificate and make it available for ad hoc charter. Centoco is also giving Piaggio the option to lease the Evo for its future marketing and demonstration needs.

*Piaggio*

“I have been looking with interest at this distinctive, Italian aircraft since its entry into service”, says Centoco chairman Anthony Toldo. “Not only is it the fastest turboprop [on the market], but it has incredibly low operating costs, and is eco friendly.”

The Evo was launched in 2014 as a revamped and higher-performance version of the now 14-year-old Avanti II, which was itself an upgrade of the original Avanti, introduced in the late 1990s. The latest model features a host of refinements, including a new landing gear from Magnaghi, a revamped, quieter interior, winglets, a reshaped front wing and five-blade composite scimitar propellers.

The Evo’s arrival in Canada brings the country’s Avanti fleet to eight – three first-generation and three second-generation variants. The USA is home to 89 Avanti-series aircraft.

Centoco’s purchase and public endorsement of the Evo will be a welcome boost for beleaguered Piaggio, which entered receivership in December 2018 after its sole shareholder, the Abu Dhabi wealth fund Mubadala, pulled out of the venture.

Chief among the agreements is a contract from the defence ministry for nine new Evos, plus an upgrade of 19 earlier-generation examples of the seven-seat type operated by all three branches of the country's armed forces. Valued at €260 million, the deal is expected to be signed in early 2020.

Engine maintenance contracts worth €167 million were sealed in July.

The Italian parliament has also given its approval to completing certification of the P1HH HammerHead – an unmanned surveillance variant of the Avanti – and the acquisition of at least one system, comprising two aircraft and one ground station, for €160 million.

HammerHead development has been on hold since the company entered receivership. Piaggio says its long-term objective is to maintain “company know-how” and participate in future Europe-wide unmanned air vehicle programmes.

Piaggio's state-appointed administrator, Vincenzo Nicastro, plans to launch a public tender for the company by early 2020, and says he has received over 40 expressions of interest.

“Our goal is to identify a new owner who is interested in taking over Piaggio in its entirety, and to complete the process by the autumn of next year,” Nicastro says.

The company, headquartered in Villanova D'Albenga, near Genoa, has an order backlog for four Evos and is scheduled to deliver three examples in 2019. Piaggio expects output to rise next year as the new orders are added to its backlog. This also includes up to 10 Evos from long-time Avanti customer Sheikh Khalifa Al Saif. The deal was announced in October and the Saudi businessman is planning to take delivery of the first examples in the second half of 2020.

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