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Beechcraft celebrates King Air milestones at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh



Beechcraft Corporation, a subsidiary of Textron Aviation Inc., a Textron Inc. (NYSE:TXT) company, celebrates two important King Air milestones this week at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh – the 50th year of King Air production, as well as the first anniversary of a record-breaking order from Wheels Up, the membership based private aviation company. The order from Wheels Up represents the largest order in history for general aviation turboprop aircraft, encompassing up to 105 King Air 350i aircraft and including maintenance, service and support.

“With the King Air family of products on display at Oshkosh this week, it is fitting to recognize two major milestones that speak directly to the reputation of this great airplane,” said Christi Tannahill, senior vice president, Turboprop Aircraft. “Flexible, reliable, efficient, high quality – these are characteristics that have defined the King Air through the years, and now Wheels Up members are experiencing these characteristics as well.”

Since the first flight in January 1964, nearly 7,200 King Air aircraft have been delivered, making it the best-selling business turboprop family in the world. Consistently improved and updated throughout the years, today’s King Airs cruise faster and have higher payloads than their predecessors, as well as navigate with the latest satellite and datalink technology – all while preserving the legendary smooth flying characteristics that King Airs are known for.

“We celebrate Beechcraft and the King Air every day at Wheels Up and are thrilled to feature the King Air 350i as the foundation of our fleet,” said Wheels Up Founder and Chief Executive Officer Kenny Dichter. “Our members love the King Air 350i for its utility, luxury and efficiency, and we are proud to say that we’ve seen the amazingly positive response from our members that we had anticipated. We congratulate Beechcraft on the 50th anniversary of King Air production and look forward to growing our relationship over the next 50 years and beyond.”

To date, Beechcraft has delivered 19 of the initial order of 35 King Airs to Wheels Up, and Wheels Up holds options on another 70 aircraft. The Wheels Up King Air 350i aircraft have several special enhancements for Wheels Up members including state-of-the-art interiors, Wi-Fi connectivity and a luxury lavatory vanity. The Wheels Up agreement includes a comprehensive maintenance program from Beechcraft that includes service for airframe, engines, avionics and propellers; scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, labor, parts and consumables.

In 2014, the King Air maintains its leadership position in the global turboprop market, seeing an increase to 34 deliveries in the second quarter over 24 deliveries in the same period last year.

Part of this success comes from special missions markets, where King Airs operate commercially and in all branches of the U.S. military, serve a variety of missions ranging from traditional passenger and cargo transport to electronic and imagery surveillance, air ambulance, airway calibration, photographic mapping, training and weather modification.

“As we celebrate aviation at Oshkosh, we’re excited also to celebrate the first 50 years of making history with the King Air,” Tannahill said. “We salute our operators who have firmly established this aircraft as an industry icon, and we salute the employees whose hard work over the decades remains a cornerstone of aviation.”

The anniversary celebration at Oshkosh will be held from 1- 3 p.m. on Wednesday, July 30, at the Textron Aviation exhibit, just inside the main gate at the 2014 AirVenture exhibition at Wittman Regional Airport.

Photo of the King Air’s maiden flight

Photo of the King Air 350i

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