AMI certificate revocation spooks charter industry
by Matt Thurber

AMI Jet Charter’s trouble with the FAA didn’t start on October 12, when the agency revoked AMI’s charter certificate, nor the week before, when it suspended AMI’s certificate, nor in March when the FAA began an investigation of AMI or even in September 2005, when the Department of Transportation fined AMI $250,000 for violation of foreign-ownership regulations.

According to the FAA, AMI’s problems began in 1998 when TAG Aviation USA, which is owned by Switzerland-based TAG Aviation Holding, bought part of Aviation Methods, a Burlingame, Calif., charter/management company that then became AMI Jet Charter.

TAG Aviation USA currently owns 49 percent of AMI, and the rest of the company is owned by two AMI executives who are U.S. citizens. TAG Aviation USA manages about 120 business jets, and owners of 48 of those jets also made their airplanes available to AMI for use in charter operations. AMI’s total fleet numbers 79 airplanes, including the 48 TAG-managed airplanes.

serious questions about ADS-B NPRM arise
by John Sheridan

While the FAA in early October released its Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) covering future mandatory carriage of ADS-B avionics, serious questions have already been raised about it. Generally, it was expected that the NPRM would cover the whole spectrum of ADS-B applications and would provide clear guidance to corporate operators anxious to benefit from the system’s full capabilities. Instead, the document focuses on the system’s “lower end” application, where the aircraft would appear only on ATC radars and on the cockpit displays of other, better equipped airplanes.

Concerns have also been expressed about equipage costs versus benefits; the length of the transition to more advanced applications; the true ownership, control and certification of the system; and its overall security once operational.

The NPRM covers the performance requirements for ADS-B out installations, with Jan. 1, 2020, to be the start date for mandatory carriage of that class of equipment. ADS-B out is similar to, but does not replace, today’s transponders, which will still be required. Instead of the current units’ responses to ATC secondary surveillance radar (SSR) interrogations, ADS-B signals are independently transmitted once per second omnidirectionally by the onboard avionics, normally via upper and lower antennas.

SSR and ADS-B signals are displayed in a similar fashion on air traffic controllers’ screens, but the ADS-B positions, derived from the required GPS/WAAS, are more accurate than those of SSR, particularly at increasing ranges from the radar. But like SSR, ADS-B out provides pilots with few, if any, direct benefits, other than in areas such as the Gulf of Mexico, which lacks significant SSR coverage.

The proposed rule would require ADS-B out equipage after 2020 in all aircraft operating in Class A, B and C airspace over the 48 contiguous states, plus Class E airspace above 10,000 feet msl. Carriage would also be mandatory up to 10,000 feet within 30 nm of FAA-specified busy airports. ADS-B out would also be required in Class E airspace out to 12 nm from the coastline over the Gulf of Mexico, at or above 3,000 feet.

Sentient Flight Group acquires two more charter divisions
On October 23, Sentient Flight Group purchased Hawker Beechcraft’s charter/management business. The announcement came one day after Sentient said it had agreed to buy TAG Aviation USA’s management business. The deal adds 22 employees, contracts for aircraft and another charter certificate to the Sentient stable. When the TAG Aviation USA deal goes through before year-end, Sentient could add as many as another 79 aircraft. The deal also includes TAG Aviation USA’s charter sales and aircraft acquisition/sales divisions.

Sentient is buying the TAG Aviation USA businesses from TAG Aviation Holding, a Swiss company that also owns 49 percent of TAG Aviation USA charter affiliate AMI Jet Charter. The FAA revoked AMI’s charter certificate on October 12, citing alleged foreign influence by TAG on operational control of AMI flights. Sentient said that it is developing plans to transfer aircraft that used to be AMI charter ally partner aircraft to Sentient charter operations “as soon as possible.”

The Hawker Beechcraft charter/management division’s “opportunity to realize true growth potential was limited under HBC,” according to the company.

“The sale of the business to Sentient Flight Group provides the synergies needed to grow in the charter and management market.”

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AMI Jet Charter’s Response

In the October 4 suspension notice to AMI Jet Charter, the FAA listed a number of points that illustrate specifically what its seven-month investigation found wrong with AMI. Within the allowed two business days, AMI appealed the suspension and provided detailed answers to the FAA’s claims.

The FAA has asked for an interview about the FAA suspension and revocation, but the agency refuses to allow any officials to be interviewed on the subject. AMI has filed Freedom of Information Act requests seeking more information about the investigation into AMI’s operations, the suspension and the involvement of FAA Eastern Regional counsel Loretta Akalay. Thus far, the FAA has provided no information in response to AMI’s requests.

The boxes below contain some of the FAA’s most damning assertions about AMI and AMI’s responses from its appeal, this being the only information available at press time. The entire document can be viewed online at www.ainalerts.com/ainalerts/alertimages/AMICertDeclaration.pdf.

FAA’s Allegations

8. Specifically, on or about Oct. 1 and 2, 2007, AMI was asked to demonstrate, while the following aircraft were in flight, how the aircraft and the aircraft pilots met the requirements of Part 135 [six aircraft are listed].

9. AMI was unable to demonstrate that the flights referenced in paragraph 8 were in compliance: specifically, AMI failed to produce or timely produce records related to pilot training, flight and duty, and rest records, and weight and balance records.

10. In addition, the FAA requested maintenance records on aircraft [three airplanes are listed].

11. AMI failed to produce or timely produce information or records to demonstrate that the aircraft referenced in paragraph 10 were airworthy prior to flight.

12. Specifically, AMI could not time[y] demonstrate that airworthiness of the aircraft and either did, or would have to, call the aircraft’s mechanic to provide the required information.

AMI’s Airworthiness Evaluation Team (AET) did not have adequate aircraft maintenance records to enable it to demonstrate the airworthiness of its aircraft.

AMI certificate action spooks industry

Suddenly last month, according to the FAA’s actions, AMI Jet Charter was such a grave danger to the public that the agency had no choice but to revoke its Part 135 certificate, which it did on October 12.

The sudden grounding of an operator perceived by most in the industry as solid, safe and reliable raised many questions. What did AMI do that was dangerous enough to warrant an emergency certificate revocation? Did AMI fail to train its pilots? Did it fail to ensure that the aircraft it flies were maintained properly? Did AMI pilots attempt to take off with the center of gravity far out of limits that the jet would not rotate and end up overrunning the runway and crashing into a building next to the airport and burning and nearly killing passengers and a local driver? The answer to all of the above was no.

AMI did not operate any of its flights like that, but one company that did—Platinum Jet Management—ended up launching the FAA into a close-up examination of operational control of charter flights, a key issue that the FAA believes was a significant factor in Platinum Jet’s overrun accident in Teterboro February 6. As a result of its prosecution of AMI, the FAA cited operational control as a fundamental factor that led to its action against AMI.

Yet in finally revoking AMI’s Part 135 certificate, the FAA added another element in its long campaign focused on AMI: the issue of foreign ownership of the company and the FAA’s allegation that the Swiss owners of 49 percent of AMI created a dangerous situation by exercising control over AMI flights.

FAA versus AMI Jet Charter

The FAA’s Allegations

The issue of foreign ownership of U.S. airlines traces its roots to the Air Commerce Act of 1926, which required that U.S. citizens own at least 51 percent of any individual aircraft for it to be registered in the U.S.

Later, under the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938, Congress required that U.S. citizens own or control at least 75 percent of the voting interests of U.S. airlines. This standard applies today.

Because the “citizenship” requirement applies to all forms of air transport certificates, Part 135 charter certificate holders also must meet the U.S. citizenship requirements.

The U.S. has restricted ownership and control of U.S. airlines for four primary reasons: protection of the then-fledgling U.S. airline industry, regulation of international air service through bilateral agreements, concerns about allowing foreign aircraft access to U.S. airspace, and military reliance on civilian airlines to supplement airlift capacity.

While other Part 135 certificate holders have lost their “citizenship” inadvertently through a merger, acquisition or major capital transaction, the FAA accused AMI Jet Charter and its 49-percent owner, TAG Aviation USA, of scheming to “make it appear to regulators that AMI rather than TAG ‘exercised control of passenger-carrying flights ostensibly operated under the authority of AMI’s air carrier certificate.’

According to the FAA, as foreign-controlled companies, neither TAG Aviation Holding of Switzerland nor TAG Aviation USA has FAA authority to fly charter trips.

In therant

The Catalyst Crash

On Feb. 2, 2005, two pilots flying a Challenger 600 operated by Platinum Jet Management under the charter certificate of Darby Aviation of Muscle Shoals, Ala., failed to note that the airplane’s cg was well forward of the forward limit and ran off the end of Teterboro’s Runway 6 at about 110 knots carrying a full load of passengers, crossed over a six-lane highway, crashed into a building and caught fire.

While the NTSB’s finding of probable cause blamed the accident primarily on the pilots’ failure to ensure the airplane was loaded within weight-and-balance limits and their attempt to take off with the center of gravity well forward of the forward takeoff limit,” one contributing factor—Darby Aviation’s failure to maintain operational control over Platinum Jet flights—became the focus of intense FAA activity.

Three other factors cited by the NTSB did not seem to receive as much FAA attention: illegal charters by Platinum Jet; inadequate surveillance and oversight of flights conducted under Darby Aviation’s Part 135 certificate by the Birmingham, Ala., FSDO; and “the FAA’s tacit approval of arrangements such as that between Darby and [Platinum Jet].”

On Sept. 9, 2005, the Department of Transportation, of which the FAA is part, served AMI Jet Charter with a consent order
Open Letter to the Charter Industry

Only one charter operator [A] reported contacting was willing to speak about the FAA's revocation of AMI Jet Charter's Part 135 certificate. The following is an open letter to the industry from Frank Gozzio, president of charter operator FlightGest. Gozzio also owns training-tracking and compliance software company Noverant, which serves the pharmaceutical industry as well as aviation.

“I was disappointed by the sudden suspension and ultimate revocation of AMI’s Part 135 certificate. My disappointment was aimed not at AMI or the FAA but at the reaction of our industry, which I would characterize as dangerously misguided.

“Yes, there will be debate over the AMI story for years to come. Unfortunately, the primary discussions will be focused on individual facets of the story, such as the foreign ownership issue, but not the root cause. There is a far more troubling question to be answered by our industry and its leadership. AMI is generally regarded as one of the safest air charter companies in the industry. It has earned high standards ratings from both ARGUS and Wyvern, companies with longstanding records for approving safety and procedures above and beyond FAA requirements. So how could a company with such a strong safety history be stripped of its certificate?

“AMI, and virtually every charter and flight department in this industry, generally assume that claimed the company was conducting “unauthorized interstate and foreign air transportation...while under the actual control of a non-U.S. citizen corporation...” The order required AMI to stop violating the applicable regulations—49 U.S.C. 41101 and 14 CFR Part 298—and assessed a fine of $250,000, half of which was due immediately and the other half suspended, provided AMI complied with the regulations defining the phased restructure to meet all DOT requirements—indeed 49 percent of AMI’s voting stock.

TAG Aviation USA, the DOT added, “by dint of being owned by TAG Holding, is a foreign corporation for Departmental licensing purposes.” The DOT further pointed out that AMI’s president, more than two-thirds of its officers and directors and holders of three-quarters of its voting interest are U.S. citizens and that two U.S. citizens owned 51 percent of AMI’s equity.

Despite AMI’s insistence that it complied with the regulations defining the company as a U.S. citizen corporation, “a review by the Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings of the totality of the circumstances showed that AMI was clearly under the actual control of TAG [Aviation] USA...” AMI said that it spent more than $250,000 restructuring to meet all DOT licensing requirements. The DOT said it still felt that enforcement was needed and agreed to imposition of the $250,000 fine, minus $125,000 for good behavior. “AMI,” the DOT added, “in order to avoid litigation and without admitting or denying the alleged violations, agrees to the issuance of this order that being safe is being compliant. Nothing can be further from the truth.

“We live in a regulated industry. From economic authority to operational specifications to security requirements, we are mandated to comply with increasing sets of standards and verify our compliance. It’s not enough to be safe; we have to prove we are safe. And if you believe it will get easier, think again. As an active member of other regulated markets, I can attest that our restrictions in aviation are relatively loose compared to other industries. Think it’s tough in our FAA world? Spend a day in an FDA-regulated company of any size. You’ll see that we actually have it easy.

“So my plea to the charter industry is simple—wake up! A stellar safety record does not guarantee compliance. And compliance audits will be more commonplace going forward. For all the technology the charter industry employs to operate our aircraft safely, we are awash in paper and inadequate processes when it comes to actually running our businesses efficiently and effectively.

“Whether through ignorance or arrogance, the charter industry refuses to accept that safety and compliance are inextricably tied. Safety does not equal compliance. If the charter industry wants to ‘get it,’ we have to realize that we need to have both. Unless we make real changes, it’s only going to get worse.”

The FAA’s Allegations

13. ...on Oct. 2, 2007, AMI was asked to produce the flight activity log for flights on [four aircraft]. AMI failed to produce the records described...in that AMI did not provide the records until Oct. 4, 2007.

16. In addition, the crew duty log indicates that AMI failed to properly record duty time. [Specific individuals are listed.]

17. On or about Oct. 1, 2007, the FAA requested records for 24 crewmembers...as well as records for the chief pilot.

18. Of the 25 crewmembers’ records requested, for 13 crewmembers AMI could not produce any personnel file records at all.

21. Of the 25 crewmembers’ records requested, for seven crewmembers AMI could not produce records related to compliance with the Pilot Records Improvement Act (PRIA).

24. AMI failed to provide records...of training indicating that expired international training had been completed for [a pilot].

27. On Oct. 2, 2007 FAA requested AMI to produce records pertaining to the operation of [aircraft], being purportedly operated under the authority of AMI Jet Charter, Inc.’s air carrier certificate, while the flight was still in progress.

28. AMI Jet Charter had no knowledge that the flight referenced in paragraph 27 was being operated.

Text and tables continue on next page

AMI Jet Charter’s Response

18. AMI, in fact, timely received the flight activity logs from the pilot-in-command for each of the flights referenced...AMII further promptly and timely entered the data contained on the flight activity logs into its flight operations management system.

19. The sole “delay” was in providing the FAA with the requested documents on Oct. 4, 2007, two days after receipt of the FAA request. When the FAA requested the documents, it did not specify a time or a deadline.

25. This allegation pertains to the entry of flight training, ground training and other office duty time into duty records. It is correct as to AMI’s past practice.

27. AMI is changing its practices and issued an Operational Bulletin dated Sept. 18, 2007, in which it instituted a requirement for pilots to record and report training and other non-flying duty time.

28. Most, but not all, of the pilots that fly AMI-operated aircraft are AMI employees. The remaining pilots are AMI’s agents as evidenced by written agency agreements...An agency agreement is explicitly authorized by the FAA in its operational control guidance.

29. Of the 25 crewmembers named by the FAA, 12 are AMI employees. After asking for clarification from the FAA inspectors about what they meant by “employment records,” the FAA inspectors specified that they wanted their “personnel files.” AMI provided the personnel files as requested for these 12 employee crewmembers. For the remaining 13, AMI did not produce a “personnel file” because these individuals are not AMI employees but rather agents, and such files do not exist for AMI’s agents.

31. AMI provided records of both pilots training at FlightSafety International.

37. Pilot [name]’s international qualification expired on July 31, 2007. AMI records note that fact, and it is flagged “***” in [pilot’s] AMI Crewmember Qualifications Report...[Pilot] has not flown internationally since April 27, 2007...International training is not required for domestic flights.

40. This allegation is false...AMI went through its standard processes and procedures to assign the PIC and the crew and validate the airworthiness of the aircraft for this flight. The flight coordinator who arranged the flight was located in AMI’s Rye Brook, N.Y. office.

41. AMI provided records of both pilots training at FlightSafety International.

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ratcheting up its case and revoking AMI’s charter certificate. According to the FAA, “AMI and TAG knowingly, intentionally and willfully engaged in a scheme and/or deceptive practice to make it appear to federal regulatory entities, including the FAA, as if AMI remained in control, including operational control, when in fact TAG exercised control of passenger-carrying flights ostensibly operated under the authority of AMI’s air carrier certificate.”

The revocation focuses on the issue of foreign ownership and control and the dangers that this presents to the flying public, while the suspension details a number of alleged infractions (see sidebar page 90, “FAA versus AMI Jet Charter”) having to do with operational control but not related to foreign ownership.

In the suspension notice, the FAA said that it was continuing its investigation into the question of foreign ownership, but in the meantime it had found that “significant safety issues may exist regarding AMI’s operations which cannot wait [for] the conclusion of our investigation. Specifically, it appears that personnel and procedures followed to exercise operational control over Part 135 operations are not in compliance with the FARS and AMI’s operations specifications.”

The suspension and revocation suggest that the FAA believes that allowing AMI to continue operating is too risky. The language in the emergency order reads, “The Acting Administrator further finds that an emergency requiring immediate action exists with respect to safety in air commerce or air transportation.” The FAA declined to answer AIN’s query about why it waited so long to shut down AMI given that it had spent the past seven months investigating this allegedly dangerous operation.

The AMI situation raises many questions, and perhaps most important among them: Does this action against AMI signal that the FAA is cracking down on charter operators by nitpicking them to the point where they are forced to shut down? Many industry experts told AIN that no charter operator could withstand the scrutiny that was applied to AMI.

![The FAA's Allegations](image1)

AMI Jet Charter's Response

employees to find [aircraft] on the flight tracker. [An AMI flight coordinator] assisted them... [and] could not immediately locate the aircraft on the Flight Explorer (flight-tracking service) but was able to bring up the aircraft based on airport pairs. [The flight coordinator]...pulled up the itinerary for the aircraft that day and provided it to the FAA inspectors.

42. Also on Oct. 2, 2007, FAA inspectors in AMI’s Rye Brook office separately questioned...AMI director of flight coordination and...an AMI flight coordinator about the whereabouts of [the same aircraft]. [They provided precise information to the FAA about the aircraft’s location.]

43. FAA regulations concerning flight locating are satisfied when the operator files an FAA flight plan. [See Appendix 1 to FAA Notice N8000.347]: An FAA flight plan for the Oct. 2, 2007 flights of [the aircraft] was filed...

44. FAA regulations require that AMI “exercise...authority over the initiation, conduct and termination of a flight.” [For two trips flown with two separate sets of passengers and repositioning...]. The airworthiness of the aircraft was confirmed and signed off by AMI’s Airworthiness Evaluation Team on Oct. 1, 2007, separately for both trips. The legality of the crew to fly the aircraft and the trip was verified and confirmed by [AMI flight coordination compliance person] at 3:45 p.m. and 3:46 p.m. on Oct. 1, 2007.

45. AMI prepared flight activity logs on Oct. 1, 2007, which had the crewmembers, aircraft, itinerary and passengers pre-printed on it.

29. AMI has been making revisions to its operational control procedures without prior approval or acceptance by the FAA.

46. FAA regulations require AMI to have procedures for operational control, which AMI has formalized in an operational control manual. On numerous occasions, AMI has provided copies of its operational control manual to the FAA. AMI has not refused to make any change or modification to its manual requested by the FAA. AMI has, in fact, received almost no feedback from the FAA concerning its operational control manual. AMI cannot require the FAA to approve or even “accept” its manual.

47. AMI has had numerous meetings with the FAA to discuss its operational control procedures. In fact, when the FAA inspection team arrived on Oct. 1, 2007, AMI’s vice president of operations...was meeting with...AMI’s principal operations inspector at the San Jose FSDO to brief him on the latest changes to AMI’s operational control manual. AMI has received no instructions or even suggestions from [the POI] or others at the San Jose FSDO concerning the Manual.

31. With respect to the flight and duty time limitations and rest requirements records, AMI does not schedule rest periods but relies on the pilots to tell AMI whether they have accomplished the required rest or not.

49. Prior to a trip, AMI establishes that there has been no duty time for a period of at least 10 hours. AMI is instituting new procedures for a more precise tracking of non-flying duty time that improves its procedures for doing this by tracking office time and other non-flying duty time.

50. The complaint of the FAA appears to be that, before a trip, AMI does not notify the pilot of the time that the pilot should go into rest. In the past, AMI informed the pilots of the FAA rest standards, reiterated those standards in training, ensured that the pilots have a rest period available and relied on the pilots to verify that they have had such rest. Ultimately, any system other

34. AMI lacks qualified management personnel to ensure the safety of its operation.

35. Specifically AMI’s chief pilot performs his duties and responsibilities only on a part-time basis.

37. It appears that the maintenance of aircraft in AMI’s operational specifications is being managed by aircraft owners and not by AMI.

55/56. AMI disagrees...The chief pilot function is a full-time position. [He] is paid for and in fact devotes his full time and attention to his position as chief pilot. In any event, AMI is taking steps to address this concern. It is hiring three assistant chief pilots to be based in San Francisco; St. Louis; and Nashua, N.H.

57. AMI believes that this allegation is based on the fact that [the chief pilot’s] family and home are in...Idaho. He has a full home office at that location. He also rents a room in the San Francisco area. He is frequently away from home. In 2006, he spent approximately 148 nights away from [Idaho] on AMI business.

58. AMI has 79 aircraft on its certificate. Of those, 49 are maintained by AMI employees. The remaining 30 aircraft are maintained by maintenance personnel employed by the owner of the aircraft but who have signed an agency agreement with AMI. The agency agreement subjects the maintenance individual to AMI’s procedures and control with respect to any work on the aircraft.

61. In addition to reviewing and ensuring the airworthiness of an aircraft before flight through its Airworthiness Evaluation Team (AET), AMI has a maintenance quality assurance department. The AET ensures and authorizes flight before each trip sequence. The quality assurance department reviews maintenance paperwork and procedures monthly for each aircraft.

38. Based on the allegations hereinabove, it appears that AMI does not have the management structure or systems to maintain effective and safe operational control of its Part 135 operation.

63. AMI disagrees and refers to the specific responses provided above.
Another question raises the issue of the value of charter auditing services. AMI received the highest rating—platinum—from auditing firm ARG/US, after an audit conducted in November 2006. If the FAA can be so convinced that a company such as AMI puts the flying public at risk, are the private auditors missing something?

ARG/US didn’t add the specific operational-control issues to its audits until after January 2007, according to Joe Moeggenberg, ARG/US president. “The AMI certificate was one of the better operations that we audited in 2006. I reviewed the audit report again [recently], and the audit team that we sent there was impressed with the overall operation,” he said. Platinum-rated charter operators are required to implement a safety management system (SMS), and AMI was one of the earlier adopters of an SMS, something that the FAA itself has been pushing hard for the charter industry to adopt.

Moeggenberg, like many in the charter industry, has a hard time understanding why the FAA felt suddenly compelled to take such drastic action against AMI. Why did the agency target AMI and what is it hoping to accomplish?

“I think the FAA was trying to get the attention of the industry and I think it succeeded,” said Moeggenberg. “I read the suspension order and I think it would be difficult for any operator the size of AMI to satisfy the FAA on any one of those 38 issues. If they uncovered safety issues seven months ago, if it was [truly about] safety of flight, why wasn’t this certificate suspended a long time ago? I think the FAA really needed to get everyone’s attention, and it did. This is a serious issue that the whole industry needs to take notice of.”

NATA president Jim Coyne agrees, and on October 15 he issued a sharply worded letter critical of the FAA’s treatment of AMI. In the letter, Coyne said that he was “extremely angered” by the FAA’s decision to revoke AMI’s charter certificate and called it a “shocking development.” He added, “NATA believes that this action against AMI is driven more by arrogance and a failure to understand how Part 135 is different from Part 121 than by true understanding about the safety of operations conducted on AMI aircraft.”

Coyne told AIN, “If they can call the AMI situation an emergency, then they can call almost anything an emergency… We really don’t believe this is going to serve any good purpose other than create less understanding… Bringing in [the issue of] foreign ownership has nothing to do with operational control.”

The FAA lawyer who has been heading up the AMI investigation is Eastern Region counsel Loreta Alkalay. The FAA has refused to permit AIN to interview Alkalay.

The FAA earlier this year launched a series of special-emphasis inspections of all charter certificate holders. The agency will not reveal how many special-emphasis inspections it has conducted or the results.

In the meantime, all that operators can do is try to comply with the regulations and maintain a good working relationship with their FAA overseers.

“Everybody should duck and run,” said charter expert Kevin Harkin. “If AMI is being scrutinized this way, I and other operators should scrutinize their procedures.”

The FAA itself is not above being scrutinized, not just by the aviation media but also by its overseers at the DOT. In September, the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure asked the DOT Inspector General’s office to review the FAA’s oversight of commuter and on-demand charter operators. The committee is concerned about whether the FAA has enough information about operators to perform proper oversight. While the DOT announcement doesn’t mention Platinum Jet, perhaps the agency’s audit of the FAA will finally address the issue of what happened to the FAA’s oversight when Platinum Jet was flying illegal charters and, in the opinion of many in the charter industry, subjecting passengers to real safety risks instead of peripheral issues such as whether a partially Swiss-owned company truly would do anything to compromise the safety of its customers.