



MERIDIAN OPENS A WINDOW TO EUROPE

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Meridian Air Company, a leading Russian business jet operator, for the first time this year ventures into Geneva EBACE exhibition that is informally considered “the main event of the European market”. The company is coming to Europe with a solid wealth of competence, expertise and skills. As CEO of Meridian Air Company Mr. Vladimir Lapinsky views it, the time has come for the operator to join the international market with a most respectable offer of high-quality service. Indeed, for the past few years Meridian has become the main newsmaker in the Russian business aviation market, often astonishing the public with extent of the job done.

In the beginning of the year the operator received EASA authorization upon early completion of a long-term procedure proving the airline’s compliance with PART-TCO (Third Country Operators) requirements. Then, just a month ago the first international ceremony “Sapphire Pegasus. Business Aviation Award” took place in Czech Republic where the companies of Europe, Middle East, North Africa and Russia won awards for excellence in business aviation. Meridian, the first one in the history of the event, became the prizewinner in the nomination “Business Jet Operator – 2015”. However, that’s just the tip of the iceberg where the main achievements of the company are hidden, i.e. experience and people.

“Many of our colleagues find Meridian’s efforts annoying. Why do you need so many auditors, we

would hear day after day? There is quite a simple explanation to that. Our company has focused on quality, so there is no room for compromise. For this very reason, we are constantly developing in the sense of compliance with the highest requirements of the market. After receiving both Air Operator Certificate (AOC) and Private Operator Certificate, we gained authorization of the International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations (IS-BAO), then, in three years we advanced from Stage 1 to Stage 2. Our specialists faced a challenge of high international standards, and certain requirements being even higher than those ones the Russian commercial operators should obey. We made up our minds to advance progressively rather than rush violently into it. We underwent a preliminary audit half a year prior to authorization that revealed gaps in our work. We had sufficient time to eliminate them; rest assured we never considered them in a formal way. Tried and tested procedures work most efficiently, our auditors acclaim. The very moment we achieved IS-BAO Stage 2, a most sensible decision followed up – such quality level should become the norm. Therefore, we are proud of our accredited achievements. Sure, this requires power and assets; nevertheless, it is worth it. I would like to emphasize that we appreciate sound support of our shareholders in this matter. Through the highest quality policy, Meridian appears attractive and competitive on the market”, Vladimir Lapinsky says.

Indeed, the company`s attitude towards service providers who must comply with Meridian`s quality standards stands out quite exceptional. On the other hand, providing the maximum possible level of flight safety is the key priority of all aviation market players. Thus, perhaps for the first time we are facing the fact that both catering and leading aviation training centers, maintenance and aircraft repair organizations undergo such audit procedure. The company does that with one and only intention – each provider shall comply with its requirements. Without that, it would be quite impossible for the airline itself to provide the required level of service quality. BizavNews interviewed an insider of a large aviation training center with FAA quality management approval (however, he wished to remain incognito), who advised that Meridian revealed two significant findings during such an audit; afterwards, when the training center failed to eliminate them for whatever reason, further cooperation was suspended. Guess what, the training center managed to eliminate the findings after a while and applied to the Russian operator offering to resume cooperation. Isn`t that worthy of respect? A Russian airline nurtures ambition to be equal and respectful partner.

Now the plans at ??????. These days Meridian offers quite a significant service portfolio. It is an exclusive operator in Russia in possession of both AOC, Private Operator Certificate and IS-BAO Certificate. The company offers to a potential client a wide choice of aircraft registration and operational management: Russian and Swiss, Irish and Bermuda and other aircraft registers, Continuing Airworthiness Maintenance Organization (CAMO), its own OPS and naturally, full service of aircraft management.

CAMO is worth a separate discussion. In July 2013, Meridian became the first and only operator at the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States (and the fourth outside the European Union) authorized for Irish registered aircraft airworthiness management. To accomplish this, the airline acquired Certificate of Compliance Part M Subpart G, so its CAMO complied with EASA regulations. This allowed the airline to continue airworthiness for the aircraft of such registers as Bermuda and Cayman Islands, Isle of Man and Aruba. Meridian`s experience is very important, because nowadays, when Russian commercial operators should provide aircraft continued airworthiness in accordance with the Russian law, mandatory CAMO certification has been introduced into force not only by European, but also other aviation authorities, Bermuda in particular (OTAR Part 39 requirements). Two years later, `this attitude` has already turned into business. The company used to invest, now it profits from continuing airworthiness management of foreign registered aircraft.

“We build our relationship with aircraft owners in such a way that the client is convinced: flight safety is sacred. Why do we demand so much from our partners? Because we demand the same from ourselves. Statistics of foreign aircraft safety inspections (SAFA) in Europe serves as a clear illustration of the company`s achievements. Meridian is one of the few Russian air operators that celebrate zero findings rate. Besides, these records are a publicly available source. We believe that the scope of high-quality service, which we can offer even to foreign clients, complies with requirements of the European market indeed. Above all, we account for possible cooperation with clients affiliated with aircraft operated in Russia. No secret there, the first goal of the company now is to do no harm, to advance while preserving the existing accomplishments by way of enlarging the aircraft fleet as well. I would like to point out that introducing a new aircraft type into the fleet is no problem. We will introduce a new aircraft type into operation at a brisk pace because our experience is solid. Thanks to CAMO, we also believe that the client who applied to us for the first time will remain loyal to us. Meridian has another ace up its sleeve that others prefer not to notice. The company can arrange flight operation of, let`s say, Aruba registered aircraft, and the required quality level will comply with EASA requirements. That`s the edge the company reaches up to in its performance. So then, why are so many aircraft left behind our business? Quality is money. Alas, it is a pity that so few aircraft owners share our approach; we did not succeed in cooperation agreement with certain partners. Everyone`s free to make his own choice here. We are firm that our offer will gain popularity on the market, and we will be glad to develop successful and mutually beneficial cooperation with new clients and partners”, Vladimir Lapinsky resumes.

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