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IT'S BIG BUSINESS!

Deal for four A380s could see VIP superjumbo concept revived

Geneva-based reseller Sparfell & Partners has been charged to market four used Airbus A380s as head-of-state aircraft and has unveiled at EBACE today a Winch Design-provided rendering of the private double-decker.

The announcement revives the concept of the ACJ380 two years after Airbus cancelled the only order ever placed for a VVIP version of the superjumbo, opening a new channel for second-hand A380 sales as the oldest aircraft approach the end of 10- and 12-year leases.

By **STEPHEN TRIMBLE**

Sparfell & Partners says the aircraft owner declines to identify the source of the aircraft, but strong clues in the public record point to Singapore Airlines.

The reseller has listed an advertisement on AvBuyer.com for four A380s delivered in 2007 and 2008 with recently completed six-year and 12-year checks, along with newly overhauled landing gear and

Rolls-Royce Trent 900 engines enrolled in a Total Care maintenance programme. The advertisement lists the aircraft as currently configured in an airline layout with 471 seats.

Those specifications match the configuration of Singapore Airlines' initial batch of A380s that were delivered starting in 2007.

Singapore Airlines last week confirmed plans to not renew 10-year leases on four of the carrier's earliest A380s, with the aircraft exiting the fleet by March 2018 with no second-hand customer identified.

In 2007, Prince Alwaleed of Saudi

Arabia became the only customer for the ACJ380, placing an order in sublime fashion for MSN2 at the Dubai Air Show by descending from his VIP 747-400 and signing the contract for the Airbus on the runway.

Several years later, Alwaleed gave up his order for the ACJ380, which became clear after Airbus removed the logo of his company – Kingdom Holdings – from a list of commercial and private customers of the aircraft.

Airbus removed the ACJ380 order from the backlog in 2015, but never lost enthusiasm for the product. The

company's electronic press kit for EBACE includes a folder with three images of an ACJ380.

Sparfell & Partners tells *Flight Evening News* that it anticipates three or four completion centres will be available to convert the used A380s to a VVIP layout, with options including a full VVIP conversion of both decks or a VVIP conversion of the upper deck alone, retaining standard airline seating on the lower deck. A full conversion can be performed within 18 months of a signed contract, Sparfell & Partners says.



◀ **UPPER DECK:**
Sparfell & Partners' Philip Queffelec (left) and Christian Hatje