



Houston Premier Jet Owner Sues Hawker Beechcraft Over Repeated Runaway Rudder Trim Events

(Houston, Texas – February 3, 2010) - Eastham Aviation, Inc. (“Eastham”), which owns a Raytheon Premier business jet, sued Hawker Beechcraft Corporation (“HBC”) over three (3) rudder trim runaways that occurred during November and December, 2009. Eastham has owned the Premier since 2006, and had it operated by Executive Jet Management (“EJM”).

In the first incident, immediately following an inspection, the Premier was being repositioned from Houston’s Hobby Airport to Conroe, Texas, for a trip. The pilot needed an unusual amount of differential rudder input as the Premier accelerated for departure. After rotation, the pilot was forced to use full right rudder to maintain directional control. The copilot examined the rudder trim indicator and confirmed an indication of un-commanded full left rudder trim. The copilot selected right hand trim until the trim indicator was centered. During taxi for the return flight to Houston, the crew again observed the rudder trim indicator fully deflected to the left. This time, however, the rudder trim would not respond to any inputs. The flight crew shut the engines down, disconnected the ship’s battery, and reversed the process to establish a “baseline”. Upon restart of the engines and all other systems, the rudder trim remained inoperative. EJM, on behalf of Eastham, contacted HBC’s Houston service center (Hawker Beechcraft Services, or “HBS”), which sent a team to investigate. HBS removed and replaced the rudder trim actuator, the rudder trim control switch, and the rudder trim position indicator, and returned the Premier to service for normal flight operations. Neither HBC nor HBS provided Eastham with any explanation as to why the rudder trim traveled to the full left position with no command input from the flight crew.

Following a number of flights, EJM planned a trip using the Premier for December 11, 2009. Prior to taxi, the crew again observed the rudder trim to have moved, un-commanded, to the full left position, and could not be re-trimmed. Several more weeks of maintenance ensued, during which HBS checked the Premier's rudder trim actuator, switches, pins, plugs, and wiring for integrity, replaced the rudder trim indicator again, replaced the rudder trim interrupt relay, adjusted the rudder servo bridle cable tension, and performed other operational checks related to the rudder trim, all of which HBS reported as satisfactory. Once again, HBS returned the Premier to service for normal flight operations. Once again, HBS identified no definitive or probable cause for the rudder trim malfunction.

Given HBC's and HBS' inability to identify the cause of the repeated rudder trim runaways, and the potential for such a runaway to cause a catastrophic loss of control of the Premier, Eastham has decided to ground the Premier unless and until the cause of the rudder trim runaways can be identified and fixed. Given HBC's failure to address Eastham's concerns about the Premier, Eastham has filed a lawsuit in which it seeks to rescind its original contract with HBC to purchase the Premier, and seeks to return the Premier to HBC, thereby "unwinding" the deal. Eastham's President Lyle Eastham explained: "We grounded the Premier because we are not test pilots and do not wish to be test subjects, and we refuse to fly the Premier unless and until HBC can tell us what caused these trim runaways, and provide us with some assurance that it will not happen again. Since HBC has refused to do this, we had no choice but to file a lawsuit seeking rescission of our contract with HBC." The case was assigned to the 234th Judicial District Court, Harris County, Texas. HBC has not yet answered the lawsuit.

Coats & Evans represents clients in aviation lawsuits, aviation transactions and aviation-related administrative matters. The firm's attorneys are all pilots and have over 15,000 combined flight hours. For more information, contact Coats & Evans, 281-367-7732, or on the web at www.TexasAviationLaw.com. The photograph used in this press release depicts the actual Premier at issue in this lawsuit.