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Aviation Expo Bringing Business To Sebring Airport



Bill Rettew Jr./Highlands Today

From left: Noe de Oliveira Souza Filho, director of Paradise Industria Aeronautica LTDA in Brazil, and Paulo Oliveira, general manager of Paradise USA. The company has leased a hangar at Sebring Regional Airport.

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An advertisement consisting of two side-by-side panels. The left panel has a dark background with the text "Homeowners Insurance Crisis" in white, bold font. Below the text is a stack of US dollar bills. The right panel has a light blue background with a sailboat on the water. The text reads "Looking for a place to Stay in Tampa Bay..." in white, bold font.



By [Bill Rogers](#) of Highlands Today

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SEBRING – The U.S. Sport Aviation Expo was established to showcase Light Sport Aircraft, promote the industry and bring business to Sebring Regional Airport and Highlands County.

It has accomplished those objectives and – hopefully – will continue to attract companies.

A newcomer to the airport is Paradise USA, whose parent is a Brazilian company that has set up its Florida operation in Sebring after having a booth at last year's expo.

"We had been looking for a place to establish our base in Florida," said Paulo Oliveira, general manager of Paradise USA. "Why Florida? Because of Florida weather and flying in paradise. The name of our company is Paradise, and I think that has a lot to do with Florida, so I think it fits right in there."

A resident of Palm Beach, Oliveira initially looked for hangars in West Palm as well as along the coast.

"I searched around from Pompano Beach all the way to Vero Beach for a commercial hangar where we could establish our operation," Oliveira said. "That's very difficult; there aren't any available."

But Oliveira found a 5,000-square-foot new hangar at the Sebring airport. The fact that the airport is in an Enterprise Zone was also appealing to Oliveira because of the tax incentives.

"One of the reasons why we chose this area is there are some incentives here for export and import," he said.

Oliveira has a partner, Noe de Oliveira Souza Filho, who is director of Paradise Industria Aeronautica LTDA in Vera Cruz, Bahia, Brazil. Their plan is to have two P-1 planes arrive in Sebring every two months beginning this May. The P-1 is one of three models the company manufactures in Brazil. It is a two-seater with a 100-horsepower Rotax engine.

The planes will be built in Brazil, assembled and tested there, according to Oliveira. They will be disassembled and placed into containers to be transported – by boat – to a port in either Miami or Fort Lauderdale and then brought by truck to Sebring.

Expanding the Sebring operation is being considered.

"There is a possibility – a good possibility – that we will start manufacturing some of it here," Oliveira said.

It was as a result of the appearance at the expo that Oliveira became interested in Sebring.

"We were impressed with what we saw," he said. "A lot of people came. We had clients already interested in purchasing our planes right there and then just by looking at the brochure."

"It's a real economic development tool for us," Louise England, executive director of the Highlands County Economic Development Commission, said of the expo.

England said her office is treating this month's expo like a trade show. She said the EDC is spending \$2,500 and will be giving gift bags to vendors at the event.