

CASE STUDY

RESPONSIVENESS LEADS TO READINESS

Thornton Aviation keeps Pilgrim Air's aircraft safe,
reliable and mission ready

“I can be out on the ramp with passengers waiting, and if there’s a glitch—whether avionics or mechanical—I call Thornton Aviation. They drop what they’re doing and show up within five minutes.”

GARY MORGAN, PILGRIM AIR

In 2019, Pilgrim Air purchased their Gulfstream GIV, and from day one, Thornton Aviation has been the backbone of their maintenance and operational support for both the GIV and Pilgrim Air’s Hawker 800XP.

Gary Morgan, Pilgrim Air’s flight department manager, describes the relationship as more than just a service arrangement—it’s a true partnership marked by trust, responsiveness and an unwavering dedication to customer needs. Thornton Aviation has handled all maintenance since acquisition, from scheduled maintenance to urgent AOG support—always going the extra mile for Pilgrim Air.

“I can be out on the ramp with passengers waiting, and if there’s a glitch—whether avionics or mechanical—I call Thornton Aviation. They drop what they’re doing and show up within five minutes,” Gary recalls. That kind of rapid response has been invaluable, especially when unexpected issues arise. Regardless of the time or urgency, Thornton Aviation’s team consistently delivers immediate assistance.

EXPERIENCE AND INSIGHT UNDERSCORE THORNTON AVIATION’S PERFORMANCE

Thornton Aviation’s expertise shines beyond quick fixes. Their management

AIRCRAFT:

Gulfstream GIV

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Scheduled maintenance
- AOG support
- Gogo L5 updates
- Honeywell MSP program

team brings decades of experience, not only from the maintenance side but also understanding the owner’s perspective. As Gary notes, “They know how important it is when you’ve got



Pilgrim Air's Gulfstream GIV

an owner to please—they understand the urgency of getting things handled.” This empathy and knowledge enable Thornton Aviation to handle both routine maintenance and complex upgrades, such as keeping Pilgrim Air’s Gogo L5 Wi-Fi system updated and managing Honeywell FMS and screen upgrades.

Thornton Aviation’s Honeywell Protection Plan support has also been a game-changer. When issues arise with the GIV’s APU, Thornton Aviation handles logistics, paperwork and even installs loaner units, ensuring minimal downtime. Their efficiency is remarkable—Gary shares that they can complete an R&R and get the aircraft back on the road in just two days. Thornton Aviation’s familiarity with Gulfstreams is evident across Van Nuys, where their hangars see a steady stream of these aircraft for major inspections and repairs.

The depth of Thornton Aviation’s expertise means every maintenance challenge is met head-on. Gary recounts a complex, intermittent bus issue in the GIV’s avionics system. Vince Russo and the team meticulously tracked down a partially

engaged wire deep in the avionics rack, solving a problem that stumped others. “There are thousands of wires and connectors—that was probably one of the hardest things they did for us,” Gary explains. Thornton Aviation’s refusal to give up, their personal investment in every aircraft and their relentless troubleshooting demonstrate their commitment to quality and customer satisfaction.

Even when Pilgrim Air is on the road, Thornton Aviation’s support

This attitude, instilled by owner Steve Zimmerman and inspired by Chuck Thornton’s philosophy of putting customers first, fosters trust and reinforces the partnership.

As Gary concludes, “Telling you no or they can’t do something is just not in their vocabulary.” Thornton Aviation’s dedication, expertise and customer-first mentality have ensured Pilgrim Air’s GIV remains reliable and ready for every mission. The partnership stands as a testament to Thornton Aviation’s

GARY MORGAN

FLIGHT DEPARTMENT MANAGER
PILGRIM AIR

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is unwavering. Gary can call any team member at any hour and they always answer, providing guidance or connecting directly with pilots to resolve issues remotely. Their parts staff goes above and beyond, working after midnight to secure urgent components for AOG situations. This level of dedication—being available at any time and always finding solutions—defines Thornton Aviation’s relationship with Pilgrim Air.

EXPERIENCE AND INSIGHT UNDERSCORE THORNTON AVIATION'S PERFORMANCE

Beyond technical excellence, fairness and integrity are at the core of Thornton Aviation’s business. Gary appreciates their transparency with work orders and pricing, always willing to review discrepancies and explain or adjust charges when appropriate.

commitment to going above and beyond—every single time.

Thornton Aviation’s culture is built on passion, experience and a drive to deliver exceptional service. Their team takes maintenance personally, refusing to walk away from challenging problems and always striving to find a solution. Whether it’s a major inspection, a complex avionics issue or a late-night parts emergency, Thornton Aviation proves their dedication to customers every day, making them a trusted partner for Pilgrim Air and many others.



Gary Morgan, Pilgrim Air





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