ISSUE 4, VOLUME 3: OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2015

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AfBAA PLOTS THE COURSE FOR BUSINESS AVIATION IN AFRICA

« L'AfBAA ELABORE LE PLAN DE VOL DE L'AVIATION D'AFFAIRES EN AFRIQUE »

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TIMES Aerospace Limited
3-4 Rumsey House
Locks Hill, Rochford
Essex, SS4 1BB
UK
Tel: +44 (0)1702 53 0000
Fax: +44 (0)1702 53 3088

Website: www.africanaerospace.aero

Directors:
Mark Brown & Kevin Sammon

Publisher:
Mark Brown
mark.brown@africanaerospace.aero

Display Advertising:
David Evans Winship
david.evans@africanaerospace.aero

Nick Hutchins
nick.hutchins@africanaerospace.aero

Production Coordinator:
Sophie Fullam
sophie.fullam@africanaerospace.aero

Circulation Dept:
Clare Brown
clare.brown@africanaerospace.aero

EDITORIAL
Editor-in-Chief: Alan Peaford
Editor: Ian Sheppard
Deputy Editor: Marcella Nethersole
Air Transport Editor: Victoria Moores
Air Transport: Alan Dron, Martin Rivers, Keith Mwanalushi
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Contributors: Terry Spruce, Jamie Hunter
Picture Editor: Ian Billinghurst
Photographers: Mark Wagner, Tom Gordon, John Miller
Design: Chris Murray, Allsortz Ltd
Sub Editors: Steve Knight, Kathie Jones, Vincent Chappard.
Production: Rick Haden, Rick Haden Associates

Editorial head office:
Aerocomm Ltd, The Tower, Guardian Avenue, North Stifford, Essex RM16 5US UK.

It's time to build the foundation for connectivity growth in Africa

This year we have seen various anniversaries of World War II, including the 70th anniversary of the surrender of Japan and the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. The end of the war brought in a new era, and aviation led the way.

As International Air Transport Association (IATA) boss Tony Tyler remarked at the World Financial Symposium in Barcelona in September, it is also 70 years since IATA was formed – with 57 airlines coming together in Havana, Cuba to create a body "to promote safe, efficient and economical air transport".

Two points stood out to me from Tyler's speech in the context of Africa. The first was profitability: "If profitability is not a dirty word when Apple turns in a 23% profit margin, then it should not be when airlines achieve an average 4% result."

He noted that this "is an average for the world, but there is a wide disparity among regions… for many airlines the struggle to keep revenues ahead of costs is still a formidable challenge".

Secondly, he said the cost of fuel still represents 28% of airline expenses, despite the fall in global oil prices. "In many cases, airlines are not seeing the full benefit of lower costs owing to lack of competition among airport fuel suppliers, onerous duties and taxes and/or excessive fuel fees."

He also pointed out that infrastructure providers often enjoy monopoly or quasi-monopoly status, governments and regulators have a vital role to play in maintaining vigorous oversight of charges and infrastructure development.

Much work remains to be done in Africa and that is assuming the infrastructure continues to improve.

The challenges will be discussed at the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) summit in Brazzaville, November 8-10 (see preview, page 21).

As we look forward to the African air transport event of the year and come away from the Routes meeting in Durban (see report page 107-111), we mustn't forget the vital role of business aviation.

Smaller, private aircraft must also have access to infrastructure alongside airlines. The benefits of business aviation in Africa, where connectivity is still lacking, are particularly attractive, and even then it gives corporate and government leaders the freedom, convenience and privacy they need to do business efficiently.

We have reports on the new Middle East Business Aviation Association (MEBAA) show in Casablanca and we held the presses for the African Business Aviation Association (AfBAA) event in Addis Ababa at the end of September.

Ian Sheppard, Editor

COVER: Tarek Ragheb, founding and current chairman of the African Business Aviation Association.

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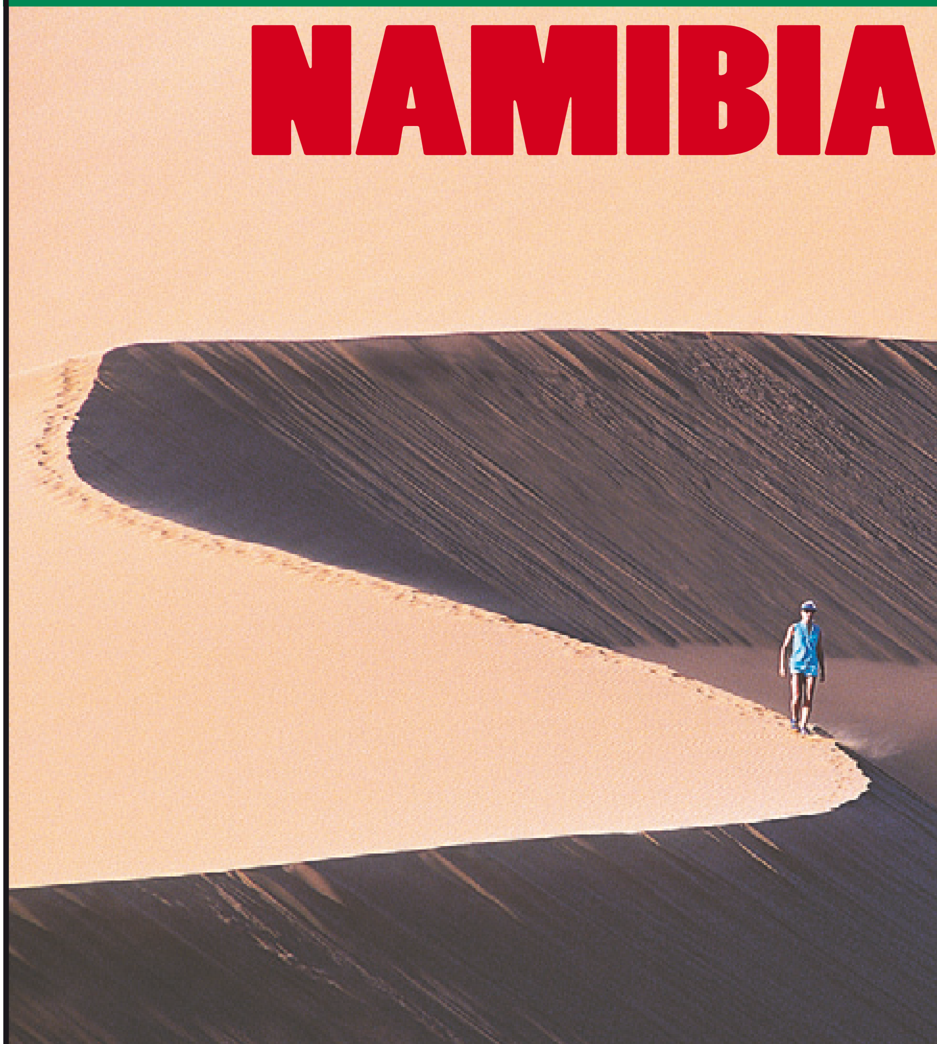
NAMIBIA



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Jailed Zimbabwe MD reinstated

Grace Pfumbidzayi has been restored to her position as Air Zimbabwe managing director – despite being in jail serving a seven-year sentence.

As *African Aerospace* went to press, Pfumbidzayi was in Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison for criminal abuse of office after a $10 million insurance scam.

Her reinstatement is assumed to be for technical reasons after she challenged her dismissal and won at an arbitration hearing while still in prison. She has also appealed at the High Court against both conviction and sentence.

Gabon and UAE in open skies deal

Gabon and the UAE have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) allowing full flexibility on routes, capacity, number of frequencies and types of aircraft, in any type of service (passenger or cargo). The deal also includes the exercise of fifth freedom traffic rights.

In addition, both parties agreed to allow unrestricted non-scheduled/charter operations between the two countries.

Rudufu adds leased Fokker 50

Rudufu Airline has leased a 1988 vintage Fokker 50 aircraft from Kenyan leasing company Gikama.

The Nairobi-based operator runs passenger and cargo services in East and central Africa, mostly in the charter sector, and serves international relief and humanitarian organisation contracts.

The aircraft – MSN 20121 – was previously with Belgian carrier VLM Airlines and it was sold to Gikama via a transaction arranged by Skyworld Aviation.

Ethiopian retrofits B777 with flat-beds in business

Ethiopian Airlines has made its business class cabin more comfortable by retrofitting all its Boeing 777 fleet with 180° business class full-flat beds. Ethiopian has invested more than $4 million in the retrofitting programme.

Tewolde Gebremariam, CEO Ethiopian Airlines said: "We have made the choice of purchasing the 180° flat business class bed seats because of the enhanced customer satisfaction they bring. Our business passengers will be able to sleep and arrive fresh to their destinations fully rested and ready to take on business after a good night's sleep."

Dassault renews its approval of FlightSafety

FlightSafety International has announced that Dassault Aviation has renewed its certificate of approval as an authorised training provider in accordance with the Falcon training policy manual.

"We are pleased and honoured to have been the first to receive a Dassault authorised training provider certificate and now to have it renewed," said David Davenport, executive vice president.

"This clearly demonstrates our commitment and ability to provide Dassault and all Falcon Jet aircraft operators with the highest quality training, exceptional value, and outstanding service they deserve."

Arik moves for flag-carrier status

Arik Air is to consider going public in 2016 with Goldman Sachs and Vetive Capital Management as initial public offering (IPO) advisers in a move that could see it become the official Nigerian flag-carrier.

After Nigeria Airways collapsed more than 10 years ago, the country has seen many airlines attempt to become national carrier.

The Nigerian Government has indicated it would be willing to appoint Arik Air if it was to go public.

Ethiopian leaseback deal for B737

Ethiopian Airlines has agreed a sale-and-leaseback deal with AWAS, covering three new Boeing 737-800s.

The final unit, MSN 40970, closed on August 4. This followed the delivery of two new 737-800s in May and July.

The airline now has six 737-800s on lease from AWAS. As part of the agreement, AWAS is assisting the carrier with transferring two 767-300ERs out of the fleet.

Ethiopian said the B767 no longer fitted with its long-term business strategy.

Egypt's Assuit Airport re-opens

Runway renovation at the Egyptian regional airport of Assuit in the New Valley area have been completed and Assuit International Airport has reopened to commercial traffic after a year's closure.

Mohamed Mahgoub, chairman of the Egyptian Company for Airports, said that the cost of the runway resurfacing and work cost $16.5 million.

Flysafair B737-800s

South Africa's Flysafair will take delivery of three Boeing 737-800s at the end of the year. The aircraft will be based at OR Tambo airport and will replace two 737-400s, giving the low-cost carrier a total fleet of six.

Air Seychelles UAE visa waiver

Air Seychelles has introduced a visa waiver for Seychellois passport holders travelling to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The development will allow Seychellois to visit the UAE for a period of up to 90 days without applying for a visa before travelling. A visa will be granted free of charge on arrival.

Joël Morgan, minister of foreign affairs and transport and chairman of Air Seychelles, said: "This visa waiver simplifies travel to the UAE for Seychellois passport holders and brings our two countries, which have longstanding bilateral relations, closer together.

SAA partners with Samsung

South African Airways (SAA) has entered into a partnership with Samsung Electronics South Africa to upgrade the in-flight entertainment offered to business class customers travelling on regional flights.

The exclusive agreement will see 500 Samsung tablets available on board selected flights longer than three hours. SAA is beginning the project on its Mauritius route.

The tablets are pre-loaded with content that can be used to read magazines, watch movies, listen to music and play games.

"After an extensive study we have customised the tablet experience to meet the specific and unique requirements of the SAA business class passenger," said Michelle Potgieter, director of corporate marketing and communications, Samsung Electronics SA.

Jet Aviation Basel expands in Africa

Jet Aviation Basel has received maintenance approvals for Dassault Falcon aircraft from the national Civil Aviation Agency in Gabon, Agence Nationale de l'Aviation Civile, and the Directorate of Civil Aviation in Namibia.

Jet Aviation Basel is authorised to provide line and base maintenance to Dassault Falcon 10, 50 and 900 aircraft registered in Gabon and to Dassault Falcon 7X series and Falcon 900 series aircraft registered in Namibia.

"These approvals improve our ability to meet rising demand for high-quality maintenance in Africa," said Johannes Turzer, vice president and general manager of the maintenance centre at Jet Aviation Basel.

ICAO's aircraft tracking website

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has announced the launch of its new centralised online information area for aircraft tracking developments.

The new aircraft tracking information area, available on the ICAO Public Website, provides a detailed timeline and all supporting reports and documentation relating to the call for and realisation of the world's first global aircraft tracking requirements.

ICAO Member States recommended the adoption of a new 15-minute aircraft tracking Standard during discussions amongst the over 850 participants to the UN specialised agency's 2015 High-Level Safety Conference (HLSC) in February of this year.

The recommended Standard is expected to be adopted at the end of 2015.

Students start practical training

Theoretical training for the first group of Cameroon aviation technicians has been successfully concluded at the Denel Technical Academy and practical on-the-job training began in July.

Michael Kgobe, CEO of Denel Aviation, said: "We have the proven products, the systems and the technical resources to strengthen the capacity of African defence forces and a strong record of support to peace-keeping operations in various theatres on the Continent."

The Cameroonian students will eventually be qualified as artisans and technicians in the aviation sector.

A second group of 62 students started their training in January.

Satellite on course to deliver broadband

Satellite operator Yahsat has announced the completion of the critical design review (CDR) on its Al Yah 3 satellite, which is now on course to provide Ka-band broadband coverage for Africa.

The CDR, completed in partnership with Orbital ATK, should see the satellite delivered by the end of 2016.

David Murphy, chief commercial officer said: "This is an important moment for us. Our customers have told us they need more services, greater speeds and a wider coverage area and we've listened; Al Yah 3 will provide all three of these things."

New PC-6 centre in southern Africa

Pilatus Aircraft has appointed Pilatus Centre Southern Africa (PTY) as its authorised PC-6 sales and service centre for sub-Saharan Africa.

The new PC-6 distributor will be responsible for all future sales and maintenance activities of the legendary Pilatus Porter PC-6 within its territory.

Gerry Wyss, sales manager of Pilatus Centre Southern Africa said: "We are proud to start selling the PC-6. The Porter is capable of operating from unprepared and rough airstrips in remote areas. With its unique short take-off and landing capabilities, reliability and versatility, this rugged aircraft is perfect for Africa – and we see big potential for it."

Med-View expands routes

Kano-based Med-View has been awarded traffic rights to 11 additional international destinations by Nigeria's Ministry of Aviation.

Currently its only international destination is Accra, in Ghana.

Now the airline has the opportunity to begin flights from Lagos to Abidjan (Ivory Coast); Bamako (Mali); Conakry (Guinea); Douala (Cameroon); Dubai (UAE); Freetown (Sierra Leone); Jeddah (Saudi Arabia); Kinshasa N'Djili (Democratic Republic of Congo); Lisbon (Portugal); London (United Kingdom); and Monrovia Roberts (Liberia).

Med-View has received a Boeing 767-300 on a lease-purchase deal with Aerocap.

It will begin flights to the Middle East destinations in November.

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Kenya Airways to sell four aircraft

After the $251.1 million loss announced earlier in the month, Kenya Airways said in August it plans to sell four of its older aircraft to raise funds.

The loss has been attributed by analysts to poor management decisions and inefficient operations, although the airline blames Middle Eastern competition and travel advisories for a decline in the tourism industry, according to the *Eastern African* newspaper.

Rainbow Airlines defers launch

Rainbow Airlines has deferred launch plans following complications with paperwork.

The start-up had planned to launch on August 26 with Harare International to Johannesburg OR Tambo flights using a Boeing B737-300.

The airline released a statement saying: "This has come about through some changes in legislature which has directly affected issuance of Rainbow Airlines' documents for operational purposes. Our handlers have advised us to postpone the launch while the application process is being concluded."

Despite the deferral, Rainbow is determined about its plans to expand in the future.

Africa integral to new strategy

Brussels Airlines has developed a strategic plan to further grow its cargo business, including commercialisation of its freight capacity out of Africa.

The airline will work with Air Logistics Group (ALG) as its general sales and service agent for Brussels Airlines Cargo.

In the last five years Brussels Airlines Cargo has seen double-digit growth as it has added additional capacity. In 2014, cargo traffic increased by 34% on North Atlantic routes and a revenue growth of 8% was achieved on African routes.

"Brussels Airlines Cargo is more than ever a strategic revenue contributor of our business and we foresee a further growth of our tonnage by 6% in 2016," said Brussels Airlines VP sales Africa & cargo Philippe Saeys-Desmedt.

SAA broadens Mauritius codeshare

South African Airways and Air Mauritius concluded an agreement that will see a broadening of its codeshare deal to enhance greater connectivity between the continent, South Africa, Mauritius and other inter-continental routes.

Both airlines will sell freely on one-another's networks with increased availability on its codeshared trunk route between Johannesburg and Mauritius.

US president Obama's first visit to Ethiopian

US president Barak H. Obama along with US senators and members of the House of Representatives paid a visit to Ethiopian Airlines, the largest airline in Africa, during the president's three-day official visit to Ethiopia in July.

Prior to his departure at Bole International Airport, the president visited the first Ethiopian Boeing 787 Dreamliner dubbed "Africa First" and held a brief discussion with Mr. Tewolde Gebremariam, CEO Ethiopian Airlines Group.

President Obama expressed his appreciation for the longstanding partnership between Ethiopian and the Boeing Company; recalling his visit at the Boeing assembly line, he was clearly pleased to see the Boeing 787 Dreamliner in Ethiopian colours.

Tewolde Gebremariam told the president that Ethiopian has 13 Dreamliners in operation and has eight on order. He noted that the B787 is very popular among customers, has more cabin humidity which reduces fatigue and dryness, has large windows, is the quietest airplane in its category, saves 20% fuel burn compared to other airplanes in its category, and is the most environmentally friendly airliner.

FlightPath to open SA training centre

FlightPath International will launch a full-service commercial aviation-training centre in the city of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Training services will be offered for the full cadre of aviation professionals – airline pilots (including MPL), maintenance engineers, cabin crew, and flight dispatchers.

"With the African continent's expected aviation growth, FlightPath will be well positioned to support training demand for Bombardier aircraft, as well as Boeing and Airbus operators in the region," said Andrew Lucas, president of FlightPath International.

IATA report sees Namibia potential

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) says more jobs could be generated and additional economic growth achieved in Namibia if intra-African markets were opened up to permit greater airline transport connectivity.

A report, undertaken for IATA, found that Namibia stands to benefit from an additional 10,600 jobs and $94.2 million additional gross domestic product (GDP) per year if just the countries in the study were to implement the 1999 Yamoussoukro Declaration to open Africa's skies to African airlines.

"This report demonstrates beyond doubt the tremendous potential for Namibia if the shackles on aviation are taken off. But for the full benefits to be realised, Namibia should work to encourage all African states to embrace the Yamoussoukro agenda," said Raphael Kuuchi, IATA's vice president for Africa.

ExecuJet hands over King Air refit

ExecuJet Aviation Group completed a refurbishment of a Beechcraft King Air B200 for the South African Air Force (SAAF) in July and handed the aircraft over at Waterkloof Air Force Base, near Pretoria.

Ettore Poggi, VP Africa, ExecuJet Aviation Group, said: "The King Air B200 aircraft has been out of operational service for almost three years and has undergone extensive work by our expert refurbishment team. This included the installation of a new digital Garmin 1000 avionics system, interior and exterior refurbishment as well as a major maintenance inspection."

Which aircraft best combines comfort with efficiency?


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Africa's Business Aviation Show

At the African Business Aviation Association (AfBAA) event in Addis Ababa in late September, the association agreed with Times Aerospace, the publisher of African Aerospace, to create a new annual business aviation show and exhibition for the continent.

A five-year deal was signed with Times Aerospace with the first step being to co-locate the successor to the AfBAA Regional Symposium, the African Business Aviation Show (ABAS), with Times Group's successful Aviation Africa summit, which took place for the first time in Dubai in May – with intention always being henceforth that the event would be held on African soil.

A number of locations are currently under consideration and the final selection will be announced later this year.

For further information see the AfBAA Symposium Report on page 65.

Korongo Airlines to cease operation

Korongo Airlines is to cease operations. At the AGM on September 4, shareholders and management agreed to start the dissolution of the airline. Service stopped earlier this year after the airline's sole aircraft was damaged during an incident at Mbuji Mayi.

Korongo Airlines started service in 2012, offering flights throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo.

SAA in codeshare with Air China

South African Airways (SAA) has announced a codeshare agreement with Air China (CA) that will enable joint marketing of Air China's newly inaugurated non-stop service between Johannesburg and Beijing, as well as points beyond Beijing to Chengdu, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Chongqing.

"The agreement will effectively enhance flight choices for customers, whether originating in Africa or China, through added connection opportunities, affordable fare options and convenience," said Sylvain Bosc, SAA's chief commercial officer.

First Rafale delivered to Egypt

This first Dassault Aviation delivery of a Rafale to Egypt came just five months after the country's decision to acquire 24 of the type to equip its air force with a latest-generation multirole fighter.

Dassault Aviation chairman & CEO, Eric Trappier, said: "After the Mirage 5, the Alpha Jet and the Mirage 2000, the Rafale is the fourth Dassault aircraft to fly in Egyptian colours, and Egypt is the first export customer for the Rafale, as it was for the Mirage 2000."

Rolls-Royce Trent 700 chosen

Rolls-Royce Trent 700 engines and the company's long-term TotalCare engine support package have been selected for the five new Airbus Beluga XL Transporters.

The new range will replace the existing Airbus Beluga fleet, and use the $700 million engines.

The Beluga XL was launched last November and provides Airbus with an extra 30% of air transport capacity.

"We look forward to the Trent 700 powering this important development in our air transport strategy. The engine has an excellent record on the A330 and is ideally suited to our requirements for this aircraft," said Bertand George, Airbus senior vice-president, head of Beluga XL programmes.

Egypt signs up to ME air space programme

Egypt has become the latest country to sign the memorandum of agreement for the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Middle East airspace management enhancement programme (MAEP), joining founder members the United Arab Emirates and Sudan.

Ahmed Ibrahim Al Jallaf, assistant director general, air navigation services provider of the UAE's General Civil Aviation Authority, who chairs the MAEP board, said another two states were expected to sign the agreement ahead of the October board meeting in Cairo.

Zambia to upgrade aviation safety

Zambia intends to enhance aviation safety by implementing aviation system block upgrades (ASBUs) by the end of 2017.

ASBUs work on the concept of improving performance in airport operations, global interoperable systems, data, optimum capacity and efficient flight paths.

Gabriel Lesa, the director general for the Civil Aviation Authority, said: "It is a very good methodology which the governments in Africa have agreed and now it forms the Abuja set targets, so Zambia is obligated to implement the ASBU, which is the aviation systems block."

Congo to get seized aircraft

Congo Airways is to finally get back one of its two new A320-200 aircraft after it had been seized at Dublin International, according to a new report from analyst ch-aviation. The High Court in Dublin prevented the Airbus Group SE aircraft from leaving Ireland following an application by two US citizens owed $11.5 million after a 2007 court ruling against the Congolese Government.

Skywise plans

South African domestic low-cost airline, Skywise, has announced plans to add B737-800s to its fleet following a similar announcement by competitor FlySafair earlier this year.

Skywise hopes to take delivery by the end of the year, with one or two aircraft being added to the fleet each year after that.

Comair upgrades

Comair has announced it will be acquiring two pre-owned B737-400s in order to retire its existing fleet of two B737-300s. The two new aircraft will add to Comair's fleet of 11 B737-400s and three B737-800s under the British Airways franchise, as well as a B737-400 and nine B737-800s operating for Kulula Air.

AMI launch

Aspen Medical International (AMI) began operating a Beech 1900C from James Spriggs Payne Airport at the Liberian capital, Monrovia, in September. The turboprop will provide general aviation and aero-medical evacuation services to West Africa, including Liberia, Sierra Leone,Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire,Ghana, Senegal, Mali,Niger and Nigeria.

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African Airlines Association (AFRAA) secretary general, Dr Elijah Chingosho, tells **Victoria Moores** *about state of the industry ahead of November's Annual General Assembly (AGA) in Brazzaville, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.*

AFRICAN AVIATION: The key questions

> 11 states are working on a road map to establish the single African air transport market.
> DR ELIJAH CHINGOSHO

Q: What is the theme of this year's AGA and what do you hope to achieve?

The theme is 'open skies: growth through competition and collaboration'.

We will look at taking advantage of the huge opportunities that we see coming in a liberalised African operating environment. We will strategize together on how African aviation can grow and thrive in a highly competitive environment, through better collaboration among African carriers.

Q: Have we finally seen a real break-though on liberalisation?

A group of 11 states has declared their solemn commitment to immediate and unconditional implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision, working towards the establishment of a single African air transport market by 2017.

These states, namely Benin, Cape Verde, Congo Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, have formed a working group at ministerial level to achieve the goal. Such clear commitments, with clear timelines, show a determined thrust towards full liberalisation of African skies.

Q: What are the next steps?

The 11 states are working on a road map to establish the single African air transport market; they held a meeting in March 2015 about promoting that market. There have also been consultations with the executing agency, the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), and regional economic communities on market supervision.

The ministerial working group is already established, with participation from AFCAC, AFRAA and other entities, and a committee of ambassadors has been set up to ensure that this momentum is maintained.

The technical regulations for the smooth management of the

Continued on Page 22

The number of carriers at African airports is already increasing steadily.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

will be completed by December 2015, the signature of a continental open sky agreement is expected by June 2016 and the establishment of an African Civil Aviation Arbitration Tribunal is envisaged to be finalised by December 2016. So, by January 2017, the single African air transport market is scheduled to be operational.

Q: What else has been achieved since last year's AGA?

Last November, we made a resolution calling upon states to speed up the liberalisation process, which was followed by the solemn declaration by the heads of states in January 2015.

Also following the call for enhanced cooperation among airlines, the joint ground handling project involving 14 member airlines is now operational and is expected to save participating airlines a significant amount of money. This is also the case with the route network and harmonisation project, which has around 18 airline participants.

AFRAA already has a very successful joint fuel project, which launched in 2011, as well as joint training activities, which benefit hundreds of airline personnel annually.

AFRAA is additionally in the process of obtaining ISO 9001:2008 certification to demonstrate the secretariat's adherence to industry best practices, in terms of key processes and continuous improvement.

Q: Looking at South African Airways and Kenya Airways, even the strongest African airlines are suffering. Why?

At best, the airline industry has low profit margins, which can be easily wiped out by periodic shocks, such as economic downturns, disease epidemics and major security threats.

For example, the Ebola outbreak affected three West African states – Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone – from 2014 to early 2015.

Some media reports painted the whole African region as being riddled with the disease, making some visitors scared to visit the continent. Kenya Airways had significant operations into the affected region, so flight cancellations affected its revenues and aircraft utilisation. Travel advisories, citing terrorist threats, issued by major inbound tourism markets like Europe and USA, also had a severe negative impact on tourist arrivals and a knock-on effect on the airlines.

The other major factor adversely affecting some African airlines is fierce competition from carriers from outside Africa, such as European and Gulf carriers, as well as Turkish Airlines. The situation is worsened by some African states giving non-African carriers more favourable traffic rights than their African counterparts.

Q: What other external events are holding African aviation back?

Since 2014, there has been an unprecedented drop in the price of oil, which should have been good news all round. However, some airlines, like Kenya Airways, had hedged their oil prices and were negatively affected.

Another critical factor is the cost of doing business in Africa, which is much higher than the world average. For example, passenger taxes, fees and charges average $40-80 in Africa, compared with less than $25 in the Gulf states. In Europe, excluding Heathrow where the charges are just over $60, most airports have charges below $33. The price of fuel at some stations in Africa is way above world average and sometimes over twice the price in Dubai.

We also face inadequate infrastructure at some airports and onerous visa requirements, which mean that, in some countries, it is much easier for non-Africans to enter without a visa. Finally, the EU blacklisting of some African states and airlines tends to paint the whole African region as being unsafe, which scares some passengers from flying with African airlines. All these factors create challenges.

Q: What still needs to change for African airlines to succeed?

We need to speed up the liberalisation process. Costs on the continent have to be brought down to world average and we need a level playing field, where African airlines are allowed to compete on an equal footing with their non-African counterparts.

There is also demand for highly trained personnel in all areas of airline operations, including top airline executives, with continuous training and development at all levels.

Industry consolidation is also important. Most African airlines are very small, with fleet sizes below a dozen aircraft, so they do not enjoy economies of scale. Carriers need greater commercial cooperation, in areas such as codeshare agreements, special prorate agreements and other marketing arrangements.

Larger African carriers should invest in some of the smaller airlines to create better schedule coordination and harmonisation, making travelling between African cities much simpler and convenient. We've seen huge win-win benefits from arrangements like Ethiopian Airlines' partnership with Asky Airlines and Malawian Airlines, as well as Kenya Airways' relationship with Precision Air.

Governments need to invest in improved airport infrastructure, while visa requirements need to be removed or streamlined.

Above all, safety standards, which admittedly have improved significantly over the past few years, need to keep improving with governments having stringent safety oversight, including over cargo, charter and non-scheduled operations. ■

The eyes of Africa's aviation industry will be on the Republic of Congo this November when the 47th Annual General Assembly (AGA) of the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) is held in Brazzaville. **Victoria Moores** *and* **Tom Pleasant** *spoke with Fatima Beyina-Moussa, Equatorial Congo Airlines' (ECAir) CEO and AFRAA's president for the year.*

Beyina-Moussa: African must seize this opportunity

Fatima Beyina-Moussa is excited, not only with the opportunity to show off her country but also to present the latest developments on the resurrected Yamoussoukro Declaration.

In 2002, after two years of negotiation, 44 heads of state committed their countries to deregulating access, capacity, frequency and tariffs within their air spaces. Progress slowed, though, leaving Africa's skies heavily protectionist against fellow African airlines. This has left intra-African flights typically requiring lengthy detours via Europe, the Middle East, or even the US.

Nonetheless, work had been continuing behind the scenes. In January 2015, the African Union met and 11 member states agreed to finally turn Yamoussoukro into a practical reality and open their skies to each other by establishing a single African air transport market by 2017.

"These are challenging, yet exciting, times for the airline industry in Africa," said Beyina-Moussa. "Right now, it is difficult to travel within Africa. African airlines did not understand the importance of Yamoussoukro but they are now committed to the liberalisation of Africa's skies.

"So far, 11 African countries, including the Republic of Congo, have committed to the Yamoussoukro Declaration. Unrestricted open skies over the continent will allow African airlines to operate to any combination of cities. The economic potential is very exciting."

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In August, Beyina-Moussa met the chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, to discuss the matter and other issues affecting African aviation. Zuma, who has taken a personal interest in aviation liberalisation, said the progress made has been highly encouraging and that it will be a motivation for others to follow suit.

"Those 11 [signatory] countries [will now] show that it is possible," she predicted. "The others will come around when they are ready."

Speaking as the president of AFRAA, Beyina-Moussa added that African carriers still face many challenges, especially the cost of fuel and ground-handling, poor infrastructure, lack of human resources and competition from non-African airlines. She hopes, though, that this year's AFRAA AGA will see delegates recognise the value of cooperation in overcoming these obstacles.

"Let's meet, interact, discuss and come up with new ideas and new directions on how to further achieve the vital balance between our common market needs and airline goals," she added.

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'Because most of Africa suffers from poor or non-existent ground-transport infrastructure, aviation enjoys a natural advantage as a means of connecting cities.'"

FATIMA BEYINA-MOUSSA

The AGA will also be when she stands down from her year-long presidency. Asked what the future held for AFRAA, she said: "Because most of Africa suffers from poor or non-existent ground-transport infrastructure, aviation enjoys a natural advantage as a means of connecting cities. Africa must seize the opportunity to develop the industry and so boost regional integration.

"That is the ultimate goal of everything we are doing now, to make it as easy to travel in Africa as it is in other parts of the world. That's not the case yet, but we are getting there and I feel AFRAA is really implementing projects to bring us together. Words are good, but actions are even better and we are now starting to see some action."

In an industry dominated by men, her career successes have also stood out as encouraging signs that women are finally managing to break through the management 'glass ceiling'.

"When I became the CEO of ECAir in 2011, I can remember there were only five other female airline CEOs in Africa. Now, there are only three or four, but I do hope more and more women will win the opportunity to manage airlines here.

"This is why, when you look at ECAir, for example, more than 60% of our staff are female. We train female cabin crew, of course, but we are also training female pilots, accountants and business managers.

"We need a strong statement of intent around African women in leadership, especially in the airline industry, otherwise all the empowerment programmes and talk will be wasted and African women will remain development objects. I am very optimistic that women can lead the aviation industry in Africa." ■

It has taken just three years for Air Cote d'Ivoire to become a market leader in West Africa. Chief executive Rene Decurey talks to **Martin Rivers** *about the Ivorian flag-carrier's next steps.*

IVORY'S TOWERING AMBITION

«Les ambitions de la Côte d'Ivoire» – Page 28

West African aviation was dealt a heavy blow in 2002 when Air Afrique ceased operations and the sub-region lost its only trans-national carrier.

Based in Ivory Coast's economic capital, Abidjan, the pan-African airline had been launched in 1961 as a joint venture between two French airlines: flag-carrier Air France and the now-defunct Union Aeromaritime de Transport (UAT). Two-thirds of Air Afrique's capital was held by an alliance of West African states, ensuring strong political support across the sub-region.

Following its demise, regional powerbrokers came together again in 2004 under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to establish a successor. Their efforts delivered Asky Airlines, the Togo-based carrier part-owned by Ethiopian Airlines.

Air France and Abidjan may, perhaps, have felt sidelined by the move, but they would not be out of the picture for long.

Around the same time that Asky launched, state-owned Air Ivoire was coincidentally taking its last gasps. Rather than bailing out the troubled company, Abidjan allowed its flag-carrier to collapse and instead approached Paris about the launch of a replacement: Air Côte d'Ivoire.

Though both small by global standards, Asky and Air Côte d'Ivoire are now leading the charge to keep West Africa's 340 million inhabitants connected.

Launched in November 2012, the Ivory Coast's new flag-carrier serves 18 regional and five domestic points from Abidjan with a fleet of six aircraft (three Airbus A319s, one A320 and two Bombardier Dash 8 Q400s). Another two Q400s are on order.

Bombardier Q400.

The man in charge of making sure that Air Côte d'Ivoire succeeds where Air Ivoire and Air Afrique failed is Rene Decurey, formerly Meridiana's vice-president of business development for the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED, a founding shareholder in Air Côte d'Ivoire).

"We have a very, very rigid hub concept," the chief executive stressed. "All our aircraft depart at around 19.00 [local time] to the east of Abidjan.

"They overnight there and come back the next morning all together at 11.00. Then at noon they leave for the West African destinations. They all come back at 18.00 and then, one hour later, they leave again to central Africa or east of Abidjan."

Working the fleet in such a uniform manner has some setbacks. Abidjan's Port Bouet Airport theoretically operates within capacity – last year's footfall of 1.3 million was well below the 2 million maximum – but when all the aircraft arrive and depart together it can be a strain. Aircraft utilisation rates on short sectors also suffer: the Q400s are airborne for an average of just six hours a day.

Nonetheless, by synchronising the network and facilitating transit through Abidjan, Air Côte d'Ivoire has rekindled the capital's historic role as a regional hub. Decurey estimates that 40% of his customers use Port Bouet Airport as a sixth-freedom stopover, beginning and ending their journeys outside of Ivory Coast.

Among these connecting passengers, almost nine out of 10 travel with Air Côte d'Ivoire on both legs. Although Air France serves Abidjan from Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport, opportunities to swap traffic with the French carrier are limited.

"In summer Air France arrives here at 18.20," Decurey noted, referring to the daily service operated with a mixture of Boeing 777s and double-decker A380s. "Certain passengers for certain destinations can make the connection. But in winter they arrive at 19.20, when all our flights have already left. This is why we cannot build the hub around Air France's timetable."

The other big international player in Abidjan, Emirates Airline, is also of limited use to the Ivorian flag-carrier. Its daily service from Dubai incorporates a fifth-freedom stop in Ghana,

Continued on Page 28

‘The Ivorian Government has really supported us all the way. We are accompanied with every step by the government and by the airport. They don’t see us just as a national carrier. They see us as a developer of the economy.’
RENE DECUREY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

snatching 48% of seats in the lucrative Abidjan-Accra market for itself.

With limited long-haul feed on offer, Air Côte d'Ivoire must stand on its own two feet and grow organically if it wishes to gain scale.

And Decurey outlined plans to do just that, promising five new destinations by November 2016: Abuja in Nigeria; Banjul in Gambia; Bangui in Central African Republic; Luanda in Angola; and Nouakchott in Mauritania. The arrival of two more Q400s in December 2015 and March 2016 will facilitate much of this growth.

Confirming that all the necessary bilateral designations are in place, Decurey said the sub-region has become a "liberalised environment" since the signing of the Yamoussoukro Declaration in 1999.

"In west and central Africa all the governments stick to Yamoussoukro, so there's no issue with traffic rights," he insisted, striking a more optimistic tone about deregulation than has been voiced elsewhere on the continent. Even in Nigeria – a notoriously bureaucratic market – Air Côte d'Ivoire encountered only a temporary delay due to Abuja's request for English-language translations of all documents.

Further down the road, the Ivorian flag-carrier wants to replace and up-size its Airbus fleet with fully owned units.

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The airline currently wet leases its A320 from South Africa's Global Aviation, and has operating leases on the A319s with Aviation Capital Group and Macquarie Aerospace. Two of those A319 leases have one-year exit clauses, while the third is due to expire in November 2017. By that time, Decurey said, Air Côte d'Ivoire will have a fully owned fleet of five A319s and four Q400s.

"We have come to the agreement within the board that we should continue with Airbus for our medium-range aircraft," he confirmed, saying the contract should be signed this year and the first delivery made in 2016.

Asked whether he would consider up-gauging to A320s, Decurey said a final decision would be taken nearer the time but at the moment it seemed unlikely.

"If traffic develops considerably we might look at this, but it's not a priority. An A320 offers a lot of capacity that you might not be able to fill," he explained. "The priority here, in this region, is to have A319s. They're not too big, so they allow us to do enough frequencies per week with the still-quite-low traffic potentials here."

Wide-bodies are also not in the current business plan. "I do not exclude this in five or six years," he said. "But first the hub we are developing in Abidjan has to be fully operational before we think about larger aircraft."

The upcoming acquisitions will be funded by a capital-raising programme, equivalent to around $68 million, which will nearly triple Air Côte d'Ivoire's share capital upon completion.

Under the new ownership structure, the West African Development Bank (BOAD) will come on-board with an 8% stake, while Ivorian private investors Goldenrod will inject new funds to retain a 15% holding. The Ivorian Government and Air France will dilute their stakes to 57% and 8% respectively (down from 65% and 20%), leaving 12% unaccounted for. AKFED sold its shares in 2013.

Decurey predicted that "private investors or banks or financial institutions" would make up the 12% shortfall.

BOAD's investment is noteworthy because of its parallel holding in Asky. But although the Ivorian and Togolese carriers have rival affiliations – Air France is a SkyTeam member, while Ethiopian Airlines is in the Star Alliance – Decurey sees no problem with cooperating locally.

"In our region you have to cooperate in one way or another, because the markets are too small to compete head-on," he insisted.

Commercial agreements are already in place between the two rivals in destinations such as N'Djamena. Asky presently serves the Chadian capital six-times weekly from Lome, while Air Côte d'Ivoire flies there thrice weekly from Abidjan. Mindful of the low frequencies, the airlines have agreed to carry each other's customers on return legs.

Looking beyond the sub-region, Decurey is also keen to strengthen ties with Air France and its SkyTeam partners.

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As well as potentially codesharing on the Paris-Abidjan route, Air Côte d'Ivoire is in the early stages of linking up with Flying Blue, Air France's frequent-flyer programme. "A big share of passengers coming on the A380 do not fly directly back to France," the chief executive noted. "If they can fly the local leg with us, and earn and burn Flying Blue miles on our sectors as well, that will be a big advantage.

"We are also aiming at far-reaching cooperation with Kenya Airways. They fly to Abidjan, so we are discussing a comprehensive network structure through both hubs – Nairobi and Abidjan – to cover the whole region."

As the former home of Air Afrique, Port Bouet Airport is a constant reminder of both the opportunities and the challenges in West African aviation.

Subdued demand levels, the Ebola crisis, and Nigeria's battle with terrorism are all cause for concern. But with existing load factors above 70% and imminent expansion on the table, Decurey is confident that the airline can achieve break-even in 2017.

And while Air France has been a valued partner, he leaves no doubt about who deserves the lion's share of credit for Air Côte d'Ivoire's success.

"The Ivorian government has really supported us all the way. We are accompanied with every step by the government and by the airport," he concluded. "They don't see us just as a national carrier. They see us as a developer of the economy." ■

SOMMAIRE

Les ambitions de la Côte d'Ivoire

Il a fallu trois ans avant qu'Air Côte d'Ivoire ne devienne un leader en Afrique de l'Ouest. Son directeur général, René Decurey a dévoilé les prochaines étapes du porte-drapeau ivoirien à **Martin Rivers**.

Quand Air Afrique cessa ses opérations en 2002, ce fut un coup dur pour la région et la sous-région qui perdaient leur unique transporteur transnational. Basée à Abidjan, la compagnie aérienne panafricaine avait été lancée en 1961. Deux-tiers du capital provenaient d'une alliance des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest.

Asky Airlines, détenue en partie par Ethiopian Airlines, remplaça la compagnie défunte en 2004 sous les auspices de la CEDEAO. La compagnie nationale Air Ivoire était à bout de souffle à cette époque. Plutôt que de renflouer l'entreprise en difficulté, Abidjan opta pour sa fermeture et proposa, à Paris, un projet de remplacement : Air Côte d'Ivoire.

Asky Airlines et Air Côte d'Ivoire connectent 340 millions d'habitants d'Afrique occidentale. Lancé en novembre 2012, la compagnie compte 18 dessertes régionales et cinq nationales à partir d'Abidjan avec une flotte de six avions (trois Airbus A319, un A320 et deux Bombardier Q400). Deux Q400 viendront consolider la flotte d'ici mars 2016.

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« Nous avons un concept de hub très, très rigide », souligne René Decurey. Cependant, en synchronisant le réseau et en facilitant le transit via Abidjan, Air Côte d'Ivoire pourra redonner le rôle historique de la capitale comme un hub régional.

Air France et Emirates, les deux principaux transporteurs internationaux, ont du mal à trouver en Air Côte d'Ivoire un partenaire pour les passagers en transit. Air Côte d'Ivoire doit également être autonome si elle veut gagner en puissance.

René Decurey a donc élaboré un plan comprenant cinq nouvelles destinations à savoir Abuja, Banjul, Bangui, Luanda et Nouakchott.

La sous-région est devenue un « espace libéralisé » depuis la signature de la Déclaration de Yamoussoukro en 1999 et les gouvernements s'y tiennent. Selon René Decurey, la coopération est privilégiée malgré la concurrence car les marchés sont trop étroits. Des discussions sont en cours avec Kenya Airways pour mettre en place un réseau (via Nairobi et Abidjan) pour couvrir toute la région.

Malgré tous les défis, René Decurey est confiant qu'Air Cote d'Ivoire puisse atteindre son seuil de rentabilité en 2017. La compagnie bénéficie du soutien du gouvernement ivoirien qui la considère comme un moteur du développement économique.

Another step in the ambitious plan to make Djibouti the logistics hub of northeast Africa has been taken with the launch of a new airline in the tiny nation. **Alan Dron** *reports.*

Air Djibouti flies again

Thirteen years after the name Air Djibouti last flew over Africa, it took to the air again in early August when a Fokker 27 freighter, leased from Kenya's Astral Aviation, departed Ambouli International Airport for Hargeisa and Mogadishu in Somalia.

The last Air Djibouti went out of business in 2002. Its successor is starting modestly, but has big plans for the future.

Air Djibouti is a venture owned 70:30 by Djibouti Ports and Free Zone Authority (DPFZA) and Aéroport International de Djibouti (AID). UK-based aircraft services and maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) company, Cardiff Aviation, is providing technical assistance and management.

Air Djibouti's operations will mesh with those of the country's sea container terminal as the African nation seeks to establish itself as a major logistics centre for the region. China is providing significant investment to help realise Djibouti's ambitions. Chinese companies are believed to be investing some $12 billion to build two new airports, a railway line to land-locked neighbour Ethiopia, and no fewer than six new seaports.

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With this in mind, the Djiboutian national carrier will initially focus on regional freight services, with Nairobi and Juba, the capitals of Kenya and South Sudan respectively, being among its next destinations, joining Hargeisa and Mogadishu.

"We're doing a three-month trial period to test the routes, to see what we can generate," said Jibril Ali Hussein, business development director at DPFZA. "The aircraft will be coming in via Dubai, and then airlifting cargo to Hargeisa and Mogadishu, plus Juba."

There are already plans to step up from the twin turboprop F27. "The next phase is to do sea-air cargo movements with a Boeing 737 or any other suitable aircraft freighter that can go as far as Lagos in Nigeria. We want to bring containers into Djibouti, and then airlift high-value goods, such as electronics, spare parts and luxury items, to land-locked countries in central and West Africa."

Assuming the initial three-month trial period goes well, the airline will then look at sourcing further aircraft to undertake passenger flights to destinations such as Dubai, Mumbai, Paris and London.

In the early days of introducing passenger services, a Boeing 737QC (quick change) aircraft that can handle both passengers and cargo is a possible acquisition. Hussein said that up to five aircraft, possibly a mix of Boing 737s, 757s and 767s, will be considered.

However, the current focus is very much on freight operations. Most of the cargo coming into Africa arrives in Dubai and is airlifted from there. A cargo vessel sailing between Dubai and Djibouti takes three days; the Djibouti authorities want to attract increasing levels of freight to their own container port.

Cardiff Aviation will provide management expertise for the young airline: "We don't have any experience and we wanted to do this as well as possible with experienced people in key positions," said Hussein. All other staff are Djiboutian. This will eventually be phased out and our objective is to have Djiboutian nationals in key positions

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Cardiff Aviation was signed in June. Under the deal, Cardiff Aviation secured a European-level Air Operator's Certificate for Air Djibouti. It will also source aircraft and provide operational management.

"Djibouti is uniquely placed to provide a hub for investment from Europe, the Middle East and Asia into Africa," said Cardiff Aviation chairman, Bruce Dickinson. "By providing full airline support and project implementation to Air Djibouti, Cardiff Aviation will bring a wealth of industry expertise and capability to one of the most exciting aviation markets in the world, to spearhead growth in a region with tremendous potential."

In an interview with the BBC, Dickinson said he hoped that Air Djibouti would help increase awareness of the African nation. "Djibouti is an amazing country but many people do not know about it," he said. "A national airline has an ambassadorial role wherever it flies from."

Air Djibouti will face early competition from one of the Arabian Gulf's 'Big Three' airlines, Qatar Airways, which announced in August that its rapidly expanding cargo arm would start a weekly Airbus A330F service from Qatar to Djibouti. ■

The new Air Djibouti will initially operate to several East African destinations to test the market, according to Jibril Ali Hussein, business development director at Djibouti Ports and Free Zone Authority.

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Air Algerie is hoping to draw a line in the sand with the appointment of new chief executive Mohamed Bouderbala. **Martin Rivers** *and* **Vincent Chappard** *look at the challenges facing Algeria's flag-carrier.*

ALGERIE AND THE PACEMAKER

Mohamed Bouderbala takes to the helm of Air Algerie following a tumultuous period at the state-owned flag-carrier, which suffered its worst ever disaster in 2014 and is coming under increasing pressure at home to improve its service levels and reliability.

Friends and relatives of the 116 mostly French citizens who perished on Flight 5017 can hope for some closure later this year, when air crash investigators publish their final report into the disaster.

The McDonnell Douglas MD-83, operated by Spain's Swiftair for Air Algerie, had been on a routine flight from Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to capital city Algiers when it crashed in Mali on July 24 2014. Preliminary findings suggest the aircraft stalled shortly after reaching cruising altitude, probably due to an auto-thrust malfunction caused by the flight crew's failure to activate engine anti-ice systems. Bad weather was also likely a contributing factor.

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The tragedy overshadowed the achievements of Bouderbala's predecessor, Mohamed Boultif. The outgoing boss had presided over several initiatives during his four-year tenure at the flag-carrier.

Chief among these was the long-awaited fleet renewal programme. Bouderbala's ascension to the top job in May came just as Air Algerie prepared to receive the last of three newly ordered Airbus A330-200s. Two of three ATR 72-600s have also recently arrived in Algiers, while the airline has unfulfilled orders for eight Boeing 737-800s and two 737-700C convertible freighters.

Speaking during the International Air Transport Association (IATA) annual meeting in Miami in June, Bouderbala said the first 737 was due to arrive imminently and that the full 16-aircraft renewal should be completed "before the end of 2016". All the new units will be used to expand operations, he stressed, insisting

that Air Algerie has "no old aircraft to replace".

The flag-carrier's pre-existing fleet comprised another five A330-200s, three 767-300s, 22 737NGs, 12 ATR 72-500s, and one Lockheed L-100 Hercules freighter. Only the Boeing wide-bodies and the freighter pre-date the turn of the century.

In addition to its permanent fleet, Air Algerie also frequently contracts extra aircraft during the summer peak season. At the time of writing, the airline was wet-leasing one A330-200 from Portugal's Hi Fly, one A330-300 from Malaysia's AirAsia X, and one A320 from Tunisia's Nouvelair.

Although passenger numbers have surged by more than 60% over the past decade – reaching five million in 2014 – Bouderbala freely admits that the airline is under-performing when it comes to customer care and punctuality. Its on-time-performance rate stands at just 55%, according to Flight Stats, while its on-board product is widely considered to lag behind rival offerings in the marketplace.

Bouderbala freely admits that the airline is under-performing when it comes to customer care and punctuality.

"We want to improve our relations with customers and get back passengers who have decided, for one reason or another, to switch to another airline," the chief executive said, promising an overhaul of management structures at the flag-carrier.

"Our aim is to develop the airline so that it reaches international standards."

Previous ideas floated in government have included restructuring Air Algerie by establishing four new subsidiaries – catering, cargo, ground-handling and maintenance – and venturing into the low-cost sphere with a no-frills division or affiliate.

The latter discussions accompanied reports that Algeria might follow Morocco's lead by signing an open-skies agreement with Europe, thereby opening the floodgates to low-cost competition.

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Today only three carriers – Spain's Vueling, Belgium's Jetairfly, and Transavia France – operate no-frills flights to Algeria. But Transport minister Amar Ghoul poured cold water on the plans in November 2014, repeating previous governments' concerns that Air Algerie could not withstand the competitive onslaught.

His anxiety was, perhaps, justified: the flag-carrier's international network today focuses heavily on 22 destinations in western Europe, including 10 in France.

Air Algerie presently accounts for more than half of the 100 daily flights operated between the north African nation and its former colonial power. Aigle Azur, a French carrier part-owned by China's HNA Group, is in second place with a 37% share, while Air France operates just 8% of

flights in the market. Open skies would decimate this cosy oligarchy.

Nonetheless, even though liberalisation is not an imminent prospect, Bouderbala remains interested in the possible benefits to efficiency and scale that a low-cost offshoot could bring.

"I have talked with several people within the company and the concept of a low-cost [operation] has not been rejected," he insisted. "We will study the different aspects of a low-cost carrier to find the right solution. But I can't say if it's going to be a new airline or a subsidiary. I don't know which form it will take."

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While taking steps to fortify the European network, the chief executive must also now re-evaluate Air Algerie's long-standing commitment to expand in its home continent.

At present, just four destinations are served in west Africa (Dakar, Senegal; Niamey, Niger; Nouakchott, Mauritania; and Ouagadougou) plus three in north Africa (Casablanca, Morocco; Tunis, Tunisia; and Cairo, Egypt). That excludes the very extensive domestic network of about 30 Algerian points.

Previous statements by the flag-carrier have suggested that Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa could join the network in the years ahead. Speaking less than a fortnight after taking on the top job, however, Bouderbala was understandably reluctant to pin down any strategic decisions.

"All these matters need to be discussed," he insisted. "Maybe [we will grow] within Africa to make a hub; we are analysing our network development [options]. But first, we want to reinforce the existing routes."

More ambitious long-haul growth will need to be carefully considered.

The airline presently serves just one destination in North America (Montreal, Canada) and one in Asia (Beijing, China). New York, Shanghai and Sao Paulo, Brazil are the most likely candidates for expansion.

But the arrival of new wide-bodies does not make long-haul growth a foregone conclusion; the A330s could also be used to boost frequencies to Dubai, for example, or to up-gauge narrow-body services to Istanbul.

Closer cooperation with Tassili Airlines, meanwhile, may deliver some efficiency gains. The carrier was founded in 1997 as a joint venture between Air Algerie and Sonatrach, the state-owned oil company, initially to ferry oil workers across the vast, energy-rich country.

Although Air Algerie subsequently sold its stake to Sonatrach in 2005, the two carriers maintain close links. Tassili's expansion into the scheduled international market was followed, in June, by the announcement of a shared ticketing agreement with its former shareholder. The cooperation will enhance travel options for customers, while making it easier for the airlines to synchronise flights.

There is no denying that Bouderbala has his work cut out trying to push through reforms at the 68-year-old flag-carrier. Inefficiency and bureaucracy are endemic to Algeria's national industries – long dominated by the state due to the country's socialist path post-independence.

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But, having formerly served as director general of the customs authority, the chief executive has both personal and professional experience of the challenges facing Air Algerie.

"[My time as] the managing director of customs at the ministry gave me the opportunity to travel a lot with Air Algerie and, thus, to get acquainted with the airline," he explained. "It enabled me to better understand how the airline operates."

That first-hand knowledge will now be put to the test as the flag-carrier works to rehabilitate its image while maintaining steady growth. Its home market faces significant headwinds due to the double-whammy of falling oil prices and rising regional instability. Protectionism may shield the parastatal from losses in the short-term. But, longer term, Bouderbala's vision of commercial excellence will require tough decisions to be taken over dependence on the state. ■

Boeing takes up the Africa challenge

Boeing predicts considerable African demand for new aircraft over the next 20 years. **Keith Mwanalushi** *talks to the aircraft manufacturer about the opportunities and challenges.*

Africa is a unique market, and one that Boeing knows well. During the Aviation Festival Africa in Johannesburg recently, the manufacturer revealed that the region could generate orders of up to $160 billion within the next two decades.

"In reference to Africa, we have shown the two sets of numbers everyone is looking for," said Van Rex Gallard, VP-sales Latin America, Africa and Caribbean for Boeing Commercial Airplanes.

"Over the next 20 years, when taking into account what we know today, the best estimate we can make is that Africa will need 1,170 aircraft worth $160 billion."

Boeing predicts that, of the 1,170 airliners, 960 will be growth aircraft and the remainder will replace those currently in operation.

An estimated 830 will be narrow-body or single-aisle aircraft, while 260 will be what Boeing refers to as small wide-body (or twin-aisle) airliners (such as the Boeing 787-8 and 787-9). Also, the aircraft manufacturer said there was likely to be 40 medium wide-body airliners (such as the Boeing 777) worth $10billion. The company sees no market in Africa at present for the 747-8.

Gallard said the numbers were staggering considering the billions of dollars involved. "But, bear in mind you don't buy aircraft across the counter. They don't get paid on that day, they get paid over time, generally 12 to 15 years of financing periods."

And, in relation to financing, Gallard confirmed that African airlines had access to cash for new aircraft. "Financing is available for African airlines, which is good," he said. "We can find funding for most of our African customers."

Clearly, demand for new aircraft will come from the handful of African airlines that have capacity to grow. Earlier this year Ethiopian Airlines upped its number of 787s by placing an order for an additional six aircraft. The Dreamliners complement the airline's 13 existing 787s currently operating in the fleet and are part of Ethiopian's long-term strategy to increase capacity and provide greater route flexibility to and from its hub in Addis Ababa.

Gallard said demand would come with challenges when this many new aircraft were coming into the market. "How are we going to fly them? How are we going to maintain them? Can we keep them flying safely in the environment that we currently have?"

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He added: "Let's face it, once you start flying on the borders of our colleagues in Zambia, you are flying by the seat of your pants. Also, you need to be way inside Algeria before you get someone on the ground to respond to your messages. There are quite a few challenges in Africa."

On a positive note, Africa's economy has grown more than 4.5% per year over the past 10 years, despite the global recession. "That's very robust economic growth for Africa in general. It's higher than any other region in the world," he said.

In fact, Africa has the youngest population of any continent and will be adding 11 million people to the job market per year for the next 10 years, according to Boeing.

High unemployment is already a challenge in many countries, further emphasising the need for proper skills and training.

The biggest risks for the region include lower commodity prices and increased volatility in the international financial markets. Even so, the expanding middle class will positively affect aviation in the region, the company said.

"There are good opportunities. But we must face the challenges," Gallard summed up. ■

SOMMAIRE

BOEING RELÈVE LE DÉFI EN AFRIQUE

L'Afrique est un marché unique que Boeing connaît bien. Durant le dernier Aviation festival Africa, l'avionneur a révélé que la région pourrait générer des commandes allant jusqu'à 160 milliards USD au cours des deux prochaines décennies.

Selon Van Rex Gallard, directeur des ventes pour l'Amérique latine, l'Afrique et les Caraïbes chez Boeing, le continent aura besoin de 1170 avions. Parmi, 960 seront des nouveaux avions alors que le reste servira à remplacer ceux actuellement en service. Selon les estimations, 830 seront des avions monocouloirs et 260 seront ce que Boeing qualifie bi-couloirs à moyenne capacité comme le B787-8 et le B787-9. Boeing prévoit aussi 40 avions à large fuselage tel le B777 d'une valeur de 10 milliards USD.

Concernant le financement, Van Rex Gallard confirme que les compagnies aériennes africaines ont accès à des liquidités pour l'achat de nouveaux avions.

Cette demande viendra essentiellement de la poignée de compagnies aériennes africaines qui ont la capacité de croître. Cette année, Ethiopian Airlines a commandé six B787 supplémentaires. Les Dreamliners font partie de la stratégie à long terme de la compagnie pour augmenter sa capacité et fournir plus de flexibilité sur les routes vers et à partir de son hub à Addis-Abeba.

L'Afrique a connu une croissance annuelle de 4,5% durant la dernière décennie malgré la récession mondiale.

Le chômage, la formation et la compétence sont les défis majeurs dans plusieurs pays même si les opportunités existent.

Parmi les principaux risques : le prix des produits de base et la volatilité accrue des marchés financiers internationaux.

Selon Boeing, la classe moyenne africaine en pleine expansion pèsera positivement sur l'aviation dans la région.

Alan Dron *spoke to Ralf Nagel, who aims to blend German efficiency with Middle East hospitality as he switches FlyEgypt from a charter operator to a hybrid carrier.*

Fly like an Egyptian (with German efficiency)

Captain Ralf Nagel: "I want to reach a critical mass fleet of six to seven aircraft as quickly as possible. If we have 10, that will be wonderful."

Astonishingly, only 3% of tourists who fly to Egypt do so on board an Egyptian airliner. Captain Ralf Nagel, CEO of new Cairo-based carrier FlyEgypt, hopes to redress that imbalance, at least slightly. The airline began services in February and is initially concentrating on the inbound tourism market.

Charter operations will form FlyEgypt's initial business, but within the next year it plans to become a hybrid carrier by also offering scheduled services.

"We need some stable 'bread and butter' business on a daily basis," said Nagel. Initially, plans had been for a low-cost carrier (LCC), but this had been dropped in favour of simply operating as efficiently as possible, with companies such as Norwegian or Ryanair the role models.

FlyEgypt will use the workhorse Boeing 737-800 as its equipment: The first arrived in January, while the second was taken on strength in July.

"The first aircraft was bought from Airberlin. I convinced the owner to do this to demonstrate to the market that we were serious," explained Nagel. The second was leased from Babcock & Brown and future aircraft will also be taken on lease.

"I want to reach a critical mass fleet of six to seven aircraft as quickly as possible. If we have 10, that will be wonderful," he added.

Nagel stresses the need for a single-type fleet. For a small operator, having more than one type is fatal, he said.

However, he does not want the airline to increase in size too dramatically. He is happy to stay off the radar screen of larger airlines. FlyEgypt will initially operate from Cairo and Alexandria. EgyptAir is obviously a huge player at Cairo, but Nagel stressed that he had no wish to start competing with the national carrier.

FlyEgypt's backers are members of the Talaat Mostafa Group, one of Egypt's largest conglomerates, with interests in everything from construction to agriculture and hotels.

The single type concept means all personnel can work on all the airline's aircraft (737-800s).

The idea for establishing an airline was born in 2010 but political unrest at that time led to the project being postponed. It was resurrected recently, with a philosophy of blending Egyptian hospitality with European efficiency.

Nagel, who had previously been with Airberlin for 16 years in a series of flying and management roles, was brought on board to head the project. He remains a qualified Boeing 737 pilot.

While the image of mixing Egyptian hospitality and European efficiency is a pleasant one, Nagel has found that the two cultures can sometimes clash. As a German dealing with Middle Eastern working practices, he admitted it could be difficult to convince his colleagues to follow his way of doing things.

His Egyptian colleagues were highly experienced, he said, but had become accustomed to operating in certain ways: "I'm strongly pushing them to educate themselves, to upgrade their experience." He hopes to establish an exchange programme to bring in more international experience.

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Although FlyEgypt has not been created as a LCC, Nagel is trying to replicate some of the standards to which European LCCs operate. Turnarounds at Airberlin take only 30 minutes, for example; his FlyEgypt colleagues initially said they could not handle even a 45-minute stop between sectors. "I said, 'No, I'll show you how to do it,'" said Nagel. "That simple example encapsulates the whole story."

He is urging his colleagues to look at every area where efficiency can be improved. One problem, he said, was that Egyptian companies tended to have a large workforce of low-paid staff: "My management colleagues are used to working in huge organisations and to having lots of assistants. You have to have a lean and profitable structure."

Adding more staff was not the answer to creating an efficient company and he had convinced senior management that it was better to pay more money to get the right staff.

FlyEgypt sees great potential in the European market. The Middle East is also promising, although there is considerable competition there. And much will depend on the political situation in the region settling down. Recent terrorist attacks in Egypt and Tunisia have had a chilling effect on reservations.

"Yes, there's a risk, but there's also huge potential," said Nagel. "If we just grab the chance and do it better than the other airlines, we might have a success story on our hands." ■

ECAir at the Helm of AFRAA

Year Placed Under the Sign of Cooperation

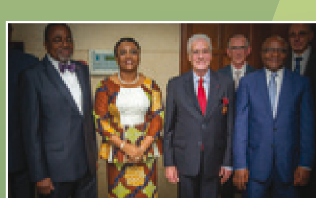
Equatorial Congo Airlines (ECAir), the Republic of Congo's national flag carrier headed by Fatima Beyina-Moussa also President of the African Airlines Association (AFRAA), will host all African airlines in Brazzaville from 8 to 10 November 2015 within the framework of the 47th AFRAA Annual General Assembly. Since her appointment to the helm of the association in November 2014, Fatima Beyina-Moussa has carried out intense lobbying worldwide to sensitize her peers and decision makers on the need to open Africa's skies, in keeping with the 1999 Yamoussoukro Decision.

NOVEMBER 2014: APPOINTMENT TO THE HELM OF AFRAA IN ALGIERS

At the end of the 46th Annual General Assembly of the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) hosted by Air Algérie in early November, Fatima Beyina-Moussa, General Manager of Equatorial Con¬go Airlines (ECAir), was designated as President of AFRAA.

MARCH 2015: MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY- GENERAL OF AFCAC IN DAKAR

Fatima Beyina-Moussa paid a courtesy visit to the Secretary-General of the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), Iyabo O. Sosina, on the occasion of ECAir's inaugural flight in Dakar, Senegal. AFCAC's key role as executing agency is to oversee the full implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision and manage the African air transport industry.



MAY 2015: DECORATION OF THE SG OF ICAO IN BRAZZAVILLE

From left to right, Rodolphe Adada, Congo's Minister of State for Transport, Civil Aviation and Shipping, with Fatima Beyina-Moussa, Raymond Benjamin, then Secretary-General of ICAO, Serge Dzota, Director General of the National Civil Aviation Agency.

JUNE 2015: PANEL ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE AIRLINE SECTOR IN NAIROBI

The President of AFRAA participated in a panel regarding the role of women in the development of the airline sector in Africa. This panel took place during the IATA Aviation Day in Kenya.

JUNE 2015: IATA AVIATION DAY FORUM IN NAIROBI

Fatima Beyina-Moussa with by Dr. Elijah Chingosho, AFRAA Secretary-General and Tony Tyler, Director General of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), during the IATA Aviation Day in Narobi, Kenya's capital city. The main theme of the forum was "Connecting Africa". This forum brought together more than 250 participants, including key players in Africa's aviation sector.

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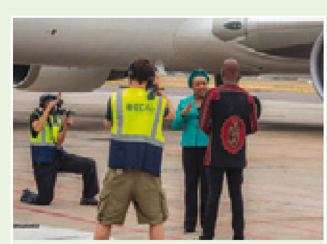
JUNE 2015: IATA GENERAL MEETING HELD IN MIAMI

From left to right: Dr. Elijah Chingosho, AFRAA Secretary-General, Raphael Kuuchi, IATA Vice-President for Africa, Mbuvi Ngunze, CEO of Kenya Airways, Fatima Beyina-Moussa, General Manager of ECAir and President of the African Airlines Association (AFRAA), Girma Wake, President of the Board of Directors of Rwandair, John Mirenge, CEO of Rwandair, Tewolde Gebremariam, CEO of Ethiopian Airlines.

AUGUST 2015: MEETING WITH THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AU COMMISSION IN ADDIS ABABA

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the AU Commission, and Fatima Beyina-Moussa, General Manager of ECAir and President of the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) held discussions at the UA headquarters in Nairobi on the challenges faced by African carriers on the continent.



SEPTEMBER 2015: INTERVIEWS GRANTED TO THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS

Over the past year, the President, Fatima Bethel-Moussa, presented the challenges faced by airlines to the journalists of TV5 (photo), as well as VoxAfrica, Africa24, CNBC, RFI...

Conception et Réalisation Romaric Oniangué / GROUPE SOROM COLOR

THE FRENCH

Air France's strong presence in Africa is an uncomfortable relic of history but the flag-carrier is working hard to give something back to the continent. **Martin Rivers** *reports.*

As one of the largest and best-known airlines in the world, it was no surprise that Air France pulled out all the stops when unveiling its cabin upgrades last year. The French flag-carrier introduced its new first, business and economy class products at four stations across the global network: Paris, of course, was a no-brainer; so too was America's financial hub, New York; likewise, perhaps, for the Chinese metropolis of Shanghai – but the fourth destination left many observers scratching their heads.

Libreville, the capital of the West African nation of Gabon, rarely finds itself bunched together with the New Yorks and Parises of the world. Yet it was this city of less than 800,000 people that rounded off the quartet.

According to Frank Legre, senior vice-president of Africa for Air France-KLM, Libreville's inclusion in the global launch "says a lot" about the importance of Africa to the group. "I often say that we were born in Africa. Our first long-haul routes went through Africa's coast and on to South America," he explained. "So we have always been flying to Africa. It's a continent that we love and that we know very well."

Like many European flag-carriers, Air France traces its roots on the continent to the colonial exploits of its home nation.

Most of the group's 54 African routes were launched during the 1930s, when West Africa was largely under the control of the French Empire.

The decolonisation of the sub-region in 1960 prompted the establishment of Air Afrique – a transnational carrier jointly owned by Air France, Union Aeromaritime de Transport (UAT), and a grouping of West African states. But while Air Afrique closed its doors in 2002, Air France has continued flying to the continent through thick and thin – preserving air bridges at a time when other carriers are either incapable or unwilling to keep flying.

"We have always said we want to be the last to stop and the first to resume [African services]," Legre insisted. "It's important for us to show that, ok, you have these glittering Gulf carriers [now adding routes], but we know Africa well, we are more accustomed to Africa, and we are not afraid of what happens in Africa."

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He cited Air France's handling of the Ebola crisis as proof of its commitment. The flag-carrier continued serving Conakry, Guinea throughout the epidemic, rejecting calls from cabin-crew unions to ground the route.

Although flights to Freetown, Sierra Leone were suspended in August 2014, they resumed again this summer after concerns about medical screening were addressed. "For us the issue is about tight controls at those airports for temperature checks," Legre explained. "As long as those controls are absolutely robust, as long as no exception is made, then we are confident in serving those destinations."

Flights to Monrovia in Liberia – the third main Ebola-hit country – had, meanwhile, been suspended for commercial reasons shortly before the scale of the epidemic became apparent.

Another test for Air France came during the 2010/11 political crisis in Ivory Coast, when incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo violently clung to power after losing a national election.

"We had to briefly stop our operation for a few weeks," Legre said of the crisis, which claimed more than 1,000 civilian lives. "But then who could have imagined that, five years later, we would be operating to Abidjan with an A380? We know there are downturns and upturns in Africa. But we are there to accompany and help the development of the continent."

The daily Paris-Abidjan route is now Air France's third largest African market by available seat kilometres, trailing behind only Reunion Island and Johannesburg. It was up-gauged again this year, with the A380 being deployed four times weekly during the peak season.

As well as growing intercontinental traffic to Abidjan, Air France assisted Ivory Coast's new government in setting up flag-carrier Air Cote d'Ivoire in 2012. The venture has quickly matured to become one of the two dominant airlines in West Africa, aided by extensive operational, technical and managerial support from Paris. France's flag-carrier also owns a 20% stake in the company.

Despite resurrecting some of Air Afrique's point-to-point services, Legre stressed that Air Cote d'Ivoire's primary focus is building up Abidjan as a regional hub.

"You can see there is a lot of development in Ivory Coast. Abidjan is again becoming the financial centre of western Africa, or even Africa," he said, pointing to the decision by the African Development Bank (AfDB) to re-establish its headquarters in Abidjan after an 11-year absence. Success with the hub model in turn allows Air France to plug gaps in its own network, leaning on Air Cote d'Ivoire for connections such as Monrovia.

French evolution

Air France-KLM now offers 42 destinations on the African continent, with long-haul flights up 4% this winter.

Among the new Air France services is Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) with 10 weekly frequencies.

Air France has increased frequencies to Yaounde (Cameroon), Abuja and Port Harcourt (Nigeria) and Libreville (Gabon), as well as Pointe Noire (Congo), Entebbe (Uganda) and Kigali (Rwanda).

"Air France KLM is experiencing strong growth in Africa and the group will continue to open roads on the continent," said chairman and CEO Alexandre de Juniac.

CONNECTIONS...

Elsewhere on the continent, the group offers up to 20 code-shared points through "pragmatic partnerships" with the likes of TAAG Angola Airlines and South Africa's Comair.

Its strongest ally on the eastern seaboard is Kenya Airways, which has a 20-year-old joint venture with KLM that entails revenue sharing on 44 intercontinental flights per week. KLM also has a 26.7% stake in its Kenyan affiliate. But that equity could soon be diluted, with some officials in Nairobi blaming the joint venture for their flag-carrier's weak financial performance and vowing to reduce KLM's stake during an upcoming $600 million bailout.

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Legre did not comment on the situation at Kenya Airways beyond acknowledging that security threats have affected tourism demand. "I can't say we see a recovery on that front yet," he admitted. "It's still fragile."

More generally, however, he made clear that equity investments are falling out of vogue for Air France-KLM. The group is diluting its Air Cote d'Ivoire stake to 8% later this year, and has ruled out investing in struggling local carriers such as Senegal Airlines. Its 2.7% stake in Royal Air Maroc is, meanwhile, described as a "small legacy of the past".

Rather than buying equity, consultancy work and commercial cooperation remain the preferred approaches for Air France – as evidenced by its role in launching Congo Airways, the new flag-carrier of Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

"We were approached by the Congolese Government, which asked Air France for support in setting up a new national carrier," Legre recalled. "Unfortunately DRC does not have a very good track record in terms of flight safety, so we were very much willing to help."

The French flag-carrier assisted Kinshasa with everything from drawing up the business plan to sourcing aircraft to obtaining flight certificates. Its consultancy unit subsequently appointed Jerome Maillet as deputy chief executive of the Congolese airline, and at the time of writing flights were due to start.

Air France had previously been a strategic backer of Air CEMAC, the proposed transnational carrier spearheaded by the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC).

But, after years of on-again-off-again negotiations, the start-up was abandoned this summer. With his central African gaze now firmly set on DRC, Legre is considering his options for wider engagement in the country.

"Setting up the new airline is one thing," he said. "Another thing is [considering] how can we help the Civil Aviation Authority to abide by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) rules, and make sure that it is slowly but surely moving off the [EU's] security list."

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Though Air France has little to gain from such a project, it fits the mould of the new dynamic between France's flag-carrier and the African continent – a relationship that has, over the decades, evolved from colonial enabler to philanthropic big brother.

One quarter of the budget of the Air France Foundation is now spent on Africa, while the Bamako-based African Institute for Careers in Aviation (IAMA) is helping to train the next generation of African aviators. With 4,000 Africans already on the group's payroll, Air France-KLM wants its positive contribution to the continent to outshine the mistakes of Europe's historic meddling. ■

Nico Bezuidenhout has completed his second stint as acting chief executive of South African Airways and, despite on-going management unrest, he leaves the parastatal in a far better position than he found it. **Martin Rivers** *reports.*

TALE OF THE CAPE

Long-running management turmoil at South African Airways (SAA) took another twist in August when human resources boss, Thuli Mpshe, became the latest person to head-up the loss-making flag-carrier in an acting capacity.

Mpshe took over the reins from Nico Bezuidenhout, the boss of SAA's low-cost subsidiary Mango, who has twice been called on to steady the ship after full-time appointees fell from grace.

His immediate predecessor, Monwabisi Kalawe, got the chop after apparently stepping on the wrong side of powerful chairperson Dudu Myeni.

Amid endless reports of boardroom bust-ups and personal feuds, Bezuidenhout succeeded during his brief tenure in executing SAA's emergency 90-day action plan and resurrecting the stalled long-term turnaround strategy.

The 90-day plan had been launched in December 2014, when SAA was in a fight for survival following threats by Nhlanhla Nene, South Africa's exasperated finance minister, to pull the plug on government bail-outs – even if it meant the "technically insolvent" parastatal ran out of cash and ceased operations.

Bezuidenhout responded by convening a self-styled "war cabinet" to reassure both his shareholder, and the travelling public, that change is afoot at the 80-year-old airline.

"Our focus in the first 60 days was first and foremost recovering the immediate liquidity needed in terms of solvency issues, [which we achieved by implementing] long-haul route changes," the acting chief said shortly before returning to Mango. "That's where the big-ticket items were sitting. If you stop flying to stupid places, you'll stop losing money."

The South African Government had good reason to turn up the heat on its ailing flag-carrier.

Following two years of heavy losses, SAA last September failed to submit its 2013/14 annual report to Parliament, admitting that it could not claim to be a "going concern" unless the state extended yet another tranche of financial support.

Having only just rubber-stamped a R5 billion ($600 million) loan guarantee in October 2012 – the latest in a string of subsidies – Parliament was understandably rankled by SAA's endless cash-calls and demanded evidence of a credible strategic turnaround before opening its coffers.

State oversight of the airline was hastily moved from the Public Enterprises Ministry to the more powerful Finance Ministry; a streamlined, four-member interim board was appointed, including accountant Anthony Dixon and aviation turnaround specialist John Tambi, and Bezuidenhout set about identifying cost savings of R1.25 billion ($150 million) within 90 days.

There was never any doubt about the first course of action. SAA's long-haul route to Beijing, China had haemorrhaged money since launching in January 2012, but was being preserved – against all commercial logic – by a South African Government eager to forge ties with the Asian powerhouse.

"If you stop flying to stupid places, you'll stop losing money."
NICO BEZUIDENHOUT

"Finally our government gave us the approval to withdraw [the route], subject to me going across and telling the Chinese myself – which I did," Bezuidenhout recalled.

"I also met with the CEO of Air China and he agreed to enter Beijing-Johannesburg (Air China was due to launch three direct services a week between Beijing and Johannesburg as *African Aerospace* was going to press, effectively replacing SAA's services.) And SAA will codeshare on Air China as its Star Alliance partner."

Codeshare agreements were also used to replace another heavily loss-making route: Mumbai, India. SAA removed the financial hub from its network in April, replacing it with a daily link to Abu Dhabi. Passengers can then connect on to 17 points in India (as well as three in China) under the second phase of a strategic partnership with Etihad Airways and its Indian affiliate, Jet Airways.

Withdrawing the two long-haul destinations will lift SAA's bottom line by R440 million ($31.7m) per year, the airline claimed, although earlier reports had pegged losses on the routes as high as R600 million ($43.3m).

Another R425 million ($30.7m) has purportedly been shaved off the cost-base by "reviewing onerous agreements", including more than 150 procurement contracts.

That figure also incorporates savings of R112 million ($8.1m) from re-negotiating

Continued on Page 42


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SA Airlink Embraer 145 regional jet with (below left) winglet of a Mango Boeing 737-800 during a flight from Cape Town to Johannesburg earlier this year; right (upper) is an SA Express Bombardier Q400 and right (lower) is an SAA Boeing 737-800 in Star Alliance colours.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

leases on three Airbus A340s. A further R150 million ($10.9m) windfall is expected when SAA extends leases on five additional units. The flag-carrier had originally planned to retire all of its four-engine A340s, but the urgency of replacing them "has dissipated somewhat" due to the collapse in crude oil prices.

"When you pay between $300,000 and $400,000 per month for an A340-600, and oil is below $60 a barrel, the trip economics are very similar to [that of] a 777," the acting chief explained. "For the others that we are leasing, we've negotiated extension rates, but not pressed the button yet."

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The fate of SAA's remaining nine A340s – most of which the flag-carrier owns outright – is still being determined. Bezuidenhout believes oil prices will eventually rise again, making the fuel-guzzling type a potential liability.

Elsewhere in the fleet SAA plans to scrap an order for 10 A320s in favour of five A330s, but the proposed swap-out is yet to be finalised.

Its contentious narrow-body commitment dates back to 2002 and has already been amended once before. Ten A320s were delivered by Airbus as part of a revised 20-unit order – complementing SAA's two leased units – but Bezuidenhout has no interest in honouring the remaining commitments. "We did a bad deal," he said candidly. "We overpaid for those aircraft."

Instead of expanding narrow-body services, SAA will increasingly focus on regional African connectivity under its rebooted long-term turnaround strategy.

"The fact of the matter is SAA's returns are substantially higher from African [routes] than from domestic operations," the acting chief noted. "So why would you keep your assets dedicated to domestic operations when you can derive a much higher return in African operations?"

This evolving network focus has already seen frequencies rise to Kinshasa, Mauritius, Harare and Maputo.

Focusing on overseas destinations in turn creates opportunities for Mango, the low-cost subsidiary of SAA set up by Bezuidenhout in 2006, to defend market share on the domestic front.

The low-cost unit's 42% market share on Cape Town-Durban will be strengthened this year, for example, along with additional frequencies for Johannesburg-Port Elizabeth. As its eight-strong fleet of Boeing 737NGs expands, regional route launches beyond the single overseas destination of Zanzibar will also be evaluated.

But there will be no assault by Mango on the all-important Johannesburg-Cape Town trunk route, which is already served more than 20 times a day by the flag-carrier's two brands.

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SAA currently operates about three full-service flights on the route for every one of its low-cost flights. While the group will alter this ratio in line with fluctuating demand, Bezuidenhout believes there is over-supply on the low-cost side due to an influx of competitors. "I'm not interested in having that little tiff," he said, referring to new services by start-ups Skywise and FlySafair. "They can have fun there."

Further afield, plans to establish a West African subsidiary have firmly been put on ice due to capital constraints. "We're not tripping over cash and we don't have loads of aircraft assets to re-deploy there to start a brand-new airline," the acting chief admitted.

SAA had been evaluating Senegal, Nigeria and Ghana as potential bases for a West African

offshoot, but is now seeking to develop "virtual hubs" through local alliances. Accra is considered the preferred regional springboard given the strong "feed and de-feed potential" of commercial partner Africa World Airlines, which is bolstering traffic on SAA's newly launched Accra-Washington DC service.

Asked whether overseas partnerships could involve equity investment – reports circulated in June that Emirates Airline was poised to buy a stake in SAA – Bezuidenhout was non-committal.

Although SAA is eager to deepen its relationship with key strategic partners, the acting chief said any would-be investor would want to see signs of progress in the long-term turnaround plan before stumping up cash.

"It's well premature to go into that space," he insisted.

"Our emphasis first and foremost is to stop the bleeding, fix the operations. Then we can go further into other discussions, and see whether or not equity partnerships are viable."

Right-sizing the flag-carrier's bloated workforce will be the final piece of the puzzle – and the most painful. SAA has announced plans to lay off about 700 employees, with Bezuidenhout insisting the head count is "too high" and that there should be "no sacred cows" when it comes to retrenchment.

"We employ at least 1,000 more people now than SAA did in 2009 and yet the flight activity and passenger volumes are very similar," he complained. "We will look at right-sizing management levels. Performance contracts will help."

That was, perhaps, a tacit reference to SAA's single biggest problem, and the one that will be hardest to resolve: incompetence in the upper echelons of management.

Kalawe's ignominious departure in April was just the latest in a string of dramatic falls from grace by senior executives. His full-time predecessor, Vuyisile Kona, also came unstuck over alleged malpractice.

The loss of three permanent chief executives in as many years has deprived SAA of sorely needed stability, turning its boardroom into a toxic environment where mass resignations are a regular occurrence.

Bezuidenhout made no attempt to cover up the governance failures of recent times. Many of the restructuring measures now being implemented date back to 2013, he admitted, when SAA hosted the 69th International Air Transport Association (IATA) AGM amid a prevailing sense of optimism that the flag-carrier was turning a corner.

"Embarrassing" is the word he used to describe the lack of progress since then.

But, having steadied the ship during the 90-day plan, and having secured a fresh R6.5 billion ($470m) government loan guarantee, SAA now has one final opportunity to attain financial stability.

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If Mpshe and his permanent successor can imbue a private-sector mind-set across its workforce – leading by example from the top down – then the airline's long-term prospects should be favourable. South Africa is the continent's second largest economy, and its government – though meddling – has always understood the socio-economic and strategic benefits of supporting a national carrier.

Asked how he would benchmark success for the long-suffering airline, Bezuidenhout said: "For you to be financially sustainable means that you have to be profitable. One cent is profitable, and that's fine. That is what we are working towards.

"Whether you can expect SAA to play a socio-economic role and have a decent return on capital investment, I don't know if those two are reconcilable. But skin-of-your-teeth profitability and serving a socio-economic mandate – there is a balance to be found there. We could achieve that." ■

A right Royal revival

Plans are afoot to revive moribund carrier Fly540 Ghana as Royal Fly-GH, as another new airline prepares to take off and serve the Ghanaian and regional markets before expanding into Europe. **Alan Dron** *reports.*

If everything goes to schedule, Ghanaian travellers will shortly have another airline from which to choose. It will mean another twist in the saga of the legacy carrier Fly540, which was acquired by pan-African low-cost airline FastJet in 2012 from its original owner, Lonrho Aviation.

Just under two years later, in May 2014, FastJet first suspended operations at the loss-making Fly540 Ghana, then sold it 13 months later to the UK-registered DWG-G Company, for a nominal $1.

Fly540 Ghana had no assets, other than its air operator's certificate (AOC) – which had expired – and came burdened with $6.9 million of debts, said Samuel Wesley-Quaison, who will be president of the revived airline. Of that figure, $4 million is being covered by a bank loan guaranteed by Lonrho. The other $2.9 million is being provided by backers, who preferred not to be named at this point, he said.

Initial equipment for the revived Fly 540 Ghana, which will be rebranded under the name Royal Fly-GH, will be a single Fokker 100 sourced from Croatian aircraft, crew, maintenance and insurance (ACMI) specialist Trade Air on a one-year lease in a 109-seat, single-class configuration.

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If the AOC is successfully obtained from the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority, Royal Fly-GH hopes to be operating by the time this issue of *African Aerospace* is published.

Using the Fokker 100 "gives us the opportunity to get into the market and to establish ourselves in the region", said Wesley-Quaison, who describes himself as a businessman with a lifelong interest in aviation. He acts as a 'company doctor', going into failing organisations and trying to pull them round.

Wesley-Quaison said he preferred to remain in the background of the new company and allow management to get on with the job. Chairman of the revived airline will be Saif Al Mughairy, a well-known aviation figure in the Arabian Gulf.

Al Mughairy was previously CEO of UAE-based maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) provider GAMCO (now Abu Dhabi Aircraft Technologies) and managing director of the emirate's offshore helicopter and executive jet operator, Falcon Aviation Services.

Initial plans are for Royal Fly-GH to operate domestic services from Accra to Kumasi, Takoradi and Tamale, to be followed by regional services to Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. "We have permits to operate to Abidjan, Freetown and Lagos," said Wesley-Quaison.

At the time of writing, Royal Fly-GH was searching for two ATR 72-500s for the Ghanaian internal routes, but examples of the Franco-Italian turboprop were difficult to come by, he added.

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Looking further into the future, the airline has ambitions to operate either the Airbus A319 (moving up to a larger A320 as routes mature) or the Boeing 737-700. Royal Fly-GH would like to obtain permission for services from Accra to London and to Hamburg and Düsseldorf. There are substantial Ghanaian communities in all three cities, said Wesley-Quaison, which could provide traffic on the Accra route.

The A319 was not a common type in West Africa, he noted, and pilots and maintainers in the region were more accustomed to the 737-700, which gave the Boeing an advantage.

However, the A319 was his preference, as it had an extra few hundred miles of range in hand over the Boeing contender, giving it a larger margin of comfort in flying into Europe.

A decision on the company's first jet equipment, however, lies some distance in the future.

Wesley-Quaison said he believed the former Fly540 had been unsuccessful in Ghana because of West African attitudes towards airline travel.

Even if an airline advertised itself as a low-cost carrier, passengers in the region expected to get a drink and snack on board automatically as part of their ticket price. A traditional, low-cost airline with unbundled fares would find it hard to operate in the region, although that might change in the next five to 10 years. ■


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TECHNICAL

Sous l'impulsion de la Commission de l'océan Indien (COI), les compagnies Air Austral, Air Madagascar, Air Seychelles, Air Mauritius et Inter Ile Air, ont signé officiellement le 21 septembre dernier, un accord de coopération multilatérale baptisé « Alliance Vanille ». **Vincent Chappard** *a voulu savoir si cet accord marquera ou non un tournant par rapport à la connectivité aérienne dans la région.*

L'Alliance Vanille: un avant-goût du futur

«The Vanilla Alliance: a taste of the future» – Page 48

La consolidation et le développement du trafic aérien régional est un enjeu capital pour l'Afrique. Il existe de nombreuses réussites que ce soit dans les Caraïbes ou en Asie du Sud Est (ASEAN). Il y a cependant des « contre exemples » en Afrique avec notamment l'abandon du projet Air CEMAC.

L'accord Alliance Vanille vise l'amélioration significative et concrète de la desserte aérienne entre les pays de l'Indianocéanie comme à l'international ainsi que le déploiement de synergies fortes entre les différentes compagnies signataires.

« Nous avons de bons espoirs que cet accord permette une croissance du trafic régional domestique comme celui des visiteurs », affirme Jean-Claude de l'Estrac, secrétaire général de la COI. « Cet accord constitue un outil essentiel à l'émergence d'un produit touristique diversifié ».

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C'est donc avant tout un état d'esprit qui change. On observe aujourd'hui une volonté commune d'amélioration globale de la compétitivité régionale où chacun s'engage à défendre ensemble des intérêts communs par le renforcement de l'offre touristique, le développement du trafic, la facilitation des affaires ou encore l'accroissement des échanges commerciaux. Pourtant, il y a eu de multiples réticences des compagnies aériennes de l'océan Indien pendant de nombreuses années sur une véritable coopération régionale. Alors comment expliquer la signature d'un accord rapide ?

Rappelons qu'en 2003, la COI avait organisé une conférence internationale inédite sur les stratégies et les enjeux du transport aérien. Celle-ci a donné suite à une étude puis à la publication d'un rapport (« Les ailes de l'Indiaocéanie ») aux états concernés. Ce plaidoyer a été un élément moteur car il a engendré une prise de conscience au niveau politique dans la région et a montré que « le statuquo n'était pas une option ». Les recommandations du rapport ont été acceptées et validées par le conseil des ministres de la COI, la plus haute instance politique et décisionnelle. C'est un acte important car on le constate en Afrique ou ailleurs, sans validation politique, il n'y a pas d'avancée dans le domaine du transport aérien. Ceci est valable également pour les compagnies aériennes.

« L'objectif de l'ensemble des acteurs est de créer à court terme une connexion quotidienne entre chacune des îles de la région. »
JEAN-CLAUDE DE L'ESTRAC

« C'est la première fois dans l'histoire de l'océan Indien que les compagnies ont décidé de se mettre autour de la table et de travailler ensemble. Quand les compagnies aériennes ne travaillent pas ensemble, rien n'avance », rappelle Marie-Joseph Malé, président de l'Alliance Vanille et PDG d'Air Austral.

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Le conseil des ministres de la COI a mis en place deux comités en mars 2015 : un comité des compagnies aériennes et un comité des administrations et de l'aviation civile. Un accord rapide a ainsi été scellé entre les parties concernées.

Les signataires de l'Alliance Vanille ont une feuille de route (recherche de formules tarifaires attractives, connectivité des programmes, optimisation des partages de codes et la mise en commun de moyens).

« L'objectif de l'ensemble des acteurs est de créer à court terme une connexion quotidienne entre chacune des îles de la région », rappelle Jean-Claude de l'Estrac.

Le transport aérien dans la région reste dynamique et il existe de réelles initiatives de la part des opérateurs. Citons le développement du trafic entre Les Seychelles et Madagascar, le lancement du « Pass Vanille » par Air Austral ou encore la création d'EWA Air à Mayotte.

Les objectifs sont ambitieux certes mais les

compagnies de l'océan Indien ont-elles la capacité financière de mettre en place de telles synergies ? Qu'en est-il aussi des actions pour répondre à la problématique des taxes et des visas ?

Jean-Claude de l'Estrac en est convaincu : « les compagnies ont la capacité et le devoir de développer la connectivité régionale et que l'Alliance Vanille a le potentiel de stimuler davantage le trafic régional ».

Posons un simple diagnostic. Air Mauritius traverse de nouveau une période de turbulences. A la suite de la dernière AGM, la compagnie mauricienne a enregistré un résultat net négatif de 23,7 millions d'euros.

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Malgré de bons fondamentaux, la compagnie est pénalisée par un mauvais « hedging » et une dépréciation de l'euro. Même si elle a misé sur un développement « long courrier » avec le renouvellement de sa flotte (quatre A350 en commande), la nouvelle direction semble désormais avoir pris la mesure du potentiel du développement régional. De son côté, Air Seychelles est une compagnie stable et en bonne santé avec une véritable stratégie régionale. Elle poursuit son développement avec son partenaire stratégique Etihad et a mis en place de nouvelles routes vers Madagascar, La Réunion en encore l'Afrique du Sud. Après une profonde restructuration, Air Austral affiche de nouveau des bénéfices. La compagnie est revenue sur ses fondamentaux et consolide sa présence au niveau de l'océan Indien. Le maillon faible reste

Continuer à la page 48

Vincent Chappard *a interrogé Marie-Joseph Malé, président de l'Alliance Vanille et PDG d'Air Austral. sur les tenants et les aboutissants de l'accord « Alliance Vanille ».*

Une grande première dans la région

Vincent Chappard : Quel a été le déclic pour la signature de cet accord ?

Marie-Joseph Malé : Le point de départ de cette « Alliance Vanille » est quelque part la volonté politique des gouvernements des pays de l'océan Indien (ndlr: la plupart d'entre eux sont actionnaires majoritaires des compagnies aériennes) d'essayer de promouvoir et de développer la connectivité entre les différentes îles de la région. La COI s'est bien investie sur cette thématique. C'est une idée relativement ancienne. Cependant, nous travaillons depuis trois ans sur la nécessité de promouvoir ensemble cette connectivité afin de faciliter le développement économique mais également le déplacement des personnes et des biens.

VC : Pourquoi avoir choisi une alliance ?

M-JM : Nous avons cherché différentes formules. Celle qui nous semble la mieux adaptée, c'est la coopération multilatérale en réunissant les compagnies aériennes. Il n'y a rien de révolutionnaire mais c'est une grande première dans la région.

VC: Quelle est la feuille de route et les actions concrètes prévues dans l'accord ?

M-JM: Tout d'abord, il ne faut pas mettre la charrue devant les bœufs. Beaucoup d'acteurs souhaitaient la mise en place immédiate d'actions concrètes. In fine, nous sommes là pour cela. Je pense, qu'avant toute chose, c'est important de définir le socle et le principe d'organisation, de fonctionnement et de gouvernance qui garantit de traiter un sujet et d'avancer efficacement. Il y a également cette notion importante de partage, d'explication et d'échanges. Nous avons défini nos missions et avons réfléchi à des domaines précis, des jalons, des plans d'actions annuels pour pouvoir lancer opérationnellement l'Alliance Vanille. Cette première étape est essentielle si on veut s'inscrire dans la durée.

VC: Quels sont donc les domaines concernés ?

M-JM: Nous avons défini trois domaines de travail pour l'année 2015 : l'amélioration de la connectivité des programmes, la mise en place d'accords simplifiés entre les compagnies aériennes et l'attractivité du « Pass Vanille ».

VC: Avez-vous les moyens en particulier financiers pour mettre en place ces différentes actions ?

M-JM: Nous avons défini au sein de cette alliance une structure de gouvernance extrêmement flexible et souple avec des moyens limités en fonds propres. On ne va pas créer une grosse structure avec 15 personnes et un siège social. Nous avons également parfaitement chiffré les actions que nous souhaitons mettre en œuvre. Chacun a accepté le principe d'y contribuer et que le jeu en vaut la chandelle.

Nous ne procédons pas pour le moment à des investissements lourds, on le verra dans les années à venir. Nous nous focalisons sur les domaines où il faut de la coopération. L'aérien, c'est avant tout, beaucoup de coordination et de travail.

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malheureusement Air Madagascar. La situation de cette compagnie est préoccupante. Elle a besoin d'une gestion rigoureuse et transparente pour se remettre en route. Son maintien dans l'annexe B de la liste de sûreté de l'Union européenne, les paralysies fréquentes et les 30 jours de grève l'été dernier ont davantage creusé ses pertes et terni son image et sa crédibilité.

Il existe donc un consensus et des stratégies autour du développement du trafic régional mais les marges de manœuvre en particulier financières des compagnies de l'océan Indien restent étroites. Selon certaines sources, des tractations avec les instances étatiques seraient en cours.

Reste maintenant la problématique des taxes et des visas. Le rapport « Les ailes de l'Indiaocéanie » montre que les prix de l'ensemble des compagnies aériennes de l'océan Indien sont en effet plus élevés de 425% par rapport aux prix opérés en Europe (par rapport à une compagnie à bas coûts comme EasyJet). Certaines sont même six fois plus chères. Les prix sont également deux à trois fois plus onéreux que ceux pratiqués dans la région des Caraïbes. Les taxes payées par un passager sur son billet d'avion représentent environ un tiers du prix du billet voire même la moitié sur certaines routes, comme par exemple celle entre Maurice et La Réunion, qui en fait une des routes les plus chères au monde au kilomètre.

La question de la taxe a été abordée entre la CIO et les états concernés. Les pays de l'Indiaocéanie travaillent également vers un assouplissement des visas avec une catégorisation plus souple et adaptée. Selon la COI, « c'est un levier sur lequel ils peuvent agir au niveau régional ».

Enfin, une meilleure connectivité passe par la possibilité de la création d'une compagnie aérienne régionale « low cost ». Mise au placard, cette option a été remise sur la table. Un récent rapport de la firme KPMG («Indian Ocean Aviation, The Way Forward») souligne sa nécessité et son utilité pour la région. Reste à savoir si cette piste trouvera un consensus et un financement.

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Selon Jean-Claude de l'Estrac, une compagnie régionale « low cost » doit développer la connectivité inter-îles et il ne s'agit en aucun cas de freiner les initiatives et la coopération des compagnies aériennes. Cette compagnie régionale, dont l'actionnariat pourrait être réparti entre les compagnies aériennes de l'océan Indien, génèrera un nouveau trafic (une hausse de l'ordre de 40% des passagers selon les estimations). Ce n'est en aucun cas une répartition du trafic existant et c'est en conformité avec la stratégie « Iles Vanilles ».

Le transport aérien dans l'océan Indien est arrivé à la croisée des chemins. Il est un vecteur essentiel au développement économique et touristique pour créer des emplois, générer et redistribuer des richesses. Une politique cohérente, régionale et ouverte est désormais en place et peut servir de modèle pour le continent africain. L'évolution du secteur aérien au niveau mondial et les difficultés auxquelles font face des compagnies aériennes de l'océan Indien pousseront inexorablement à davantage de coopération, d'entente voire un mouvement de fusion ou encore la création d'un marché régional (proposition des Seychelles).

Le processus est désormais enclenché. Il incombe maintenant aux compagnies, aux états et au marché de façonner sa route pour on l'espère, un envol serein et durable. ■

SUMMARY

The Vanilla Alliance: a taste of the future

Under the leadership of the Indian Ocean Commission (COI), the companies Air Austral, Air Madagascar, Air Mauritius, Air Seychelles and Inter Ile Air, signed in September a multilateral cooperation agreement called the "Vanilla Alliance". **Vincent Chappard** *reports.*

The Vanilla Alliance is a novel and promising partnership under the leadership of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). It consists of Air Austral, Air Madagascar, Air Mauritius and Air Seychelles, which all signed a multilateral cooperation agreement last September.

The Vanilla Alliance agreement is a significant and concrete improvement in the air services serving the islands of the Indian Ocean, and is designed to lead to strong synergies between the signatory companies.

"We have high hopes that this agreement will allow traffic growth," said Jean-Claude de l'Estrac, secretary general of the IOC. "This agreement is an essential tool to the emergence of a diversified tourism product."

It signifies a changing mindset; there is now a common will to improve overall regional competitiveness, where everyone agrees to defend collectively their common interests through strengthening tourism supply, traffic development, business facilitation and increase trade.

How come after many years where some Indian Ocean airlines have been reluctant to work together has there now been this relatively quick agreement?

In 2003 the IOC organized an unprecedented international conference on strategies and issues in air transport. It implemented a study which led to a report ("Les ailes de l'Indiaocéanie") which became the driving force behind the eventual decision – via increased awareness at the political level in the region of the importance of such a deal; and that the status quo was not an option.

The report's recommendations were accepted and validated by the Council of Ministers of the IOC - an important act because without political approval, there is no breakthrough in the field of transport

The Council of Ministers set up two committees in March 2015, an airlines committee and a committee of government and civil aviation. The signatories to the Vanilla Alliance now have a road map towards more attractive tariff packages for passengers, connectivity programs, optimization of code sharing and pooling of means.

"The goal of all players in the short term is to create a daily connection between each of the islands in the region," said Jean-Claude de l'Estrac.

There have already been real initiatives between operators. These include the development of traffic between the Seychelles and Madagascar, the launching of the "Pass Vanilla" by Air Austral and and the creation of EWA Air in Mayotte.

The " Les ailes de l'Indiaocéanie" report showed that ticket prices set by Indian Ocean airlines are 425 percent higher than prices for similar distances flown in Europe (compared to low-costs airlines such as EasyJet). They are also two to three times more expensive than those charged in the Caribbean region.

Muneer Bankole, chief executive of Nigeria's Med-View Airline, tells **Martin Rivers** *he is on a mission to grow market share and boost the company's image abroad.*

MAN ON A MISSION

Less than a decade after starting life as a charter operator for the Hajj pilgrimage, Nigeria's Med-View Airline is building up its scheduled network across West Africa while looking for expansion opportunities beyond the sub-region.

"We are moving gradually in the next 12 months to make additional inroads into four new destinations: Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), Conakry (Guinea), Dakar (Senegal) and probably Liberia," said chief executive Muneer Bankole.

The addition of several regional points will be a major leap for the Lagos-based carrier, which presently deploys five Boeing 737 Classics on scheduled services to four domestic cities (Abuja, Port Harcourt, Yola and Enugu) plus Accra in Ghana.

But cross-border flying is nothing new for Bankole's airline. Med-View made its name chartering wide-bodies to Saudi Arabia for religious traffic, and with the upcoming arrival of its own 767-300ER – on finance lease from AerCap – its scheduled network will expand to reach the Middle East and, potentially, even Europe and Asia.

"The plan is to increase the fleet in the first quarter of 2016 and to move beyond our present location in West Africa," the chief executive explained. "We have been granted the rights for scheduled operations to Dubai and Jeddah. That is why we have the need for the 767."

Med-View's expanding list of bilateral designations reportedly also now includes London, Lisbon, Singapore and Israel, although there are no imminent plans to make use of those flying rights.

The flurry of activity comes just three years after scheduled domestic operations began and one year after the first international flight was timetabled. To date, the airline has transported more than one million scheduled passengers, Bankole said, on top of about 250,000 Hajj pilgrims since the launch of charter services in 2007.

"At the moment we operate 12 daily flights, [including] six to Abuja," he confirmed. "Our flights are over 90% on-time and that's why passengers actually go for Med-View. We keep to time."

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Although the airline's focus has shifted to scheduled traffic, it continues to develop the charter and cargo side of the business. "We are the general agent for Saudia Cargo in Nigeria," Bankole noted. "They are doing pretty well. Their operation is with a 747-400F, maximum 100tonnes per flight, so we handle cargo for them on the side."

Overseas partnerships, he stressed, have always been at the heart of the business model, with Portugal's EuroAtlantic Airways and Iceland's Air Atlanta providing the wide-bodies for Hajj services. By contracting out EuroAtlantic's 767s in each of the past eight years, Med-View has built a dependable seasonal service that is now operated on a mixed-crew basis.

As he looks to the future, it is this focus on strong partnerships that will guide Med-View through the next phase of its growth.

The chief executive has, in the past, criticised the Nigerian Government for liberalising access to secondary airports in the country, arguing that foreign carriers should be forced to connect with local operators in Lagos. His attendance at the International Air Transport Association (IATA) AGM in Miami, from where he was speaking, was marked by an open invitation to sign interline and codeshare agreements on Med-View's domestic routes.

The overture was, perhaps, targeted mainly at Delta Air Lines, United Airlines and Virgin Atlantic Airways – carriers whose Nigerian presence is restricted to Lagos.

It will be a tougher sell for the likes of British Airways, Air France, Lufthansa, Turkish Airlines, EgyptAir, Middle East Airlines and Emirates Airline. They all serve capital city Abuja, or secondary points such as Port Harcourt and Kano, with their own metal. Unless Nigeria revokes their bilateral designations, these carriers will be likely to continue favouring nonstop connections where commercially viable.

Either way, Nigeria's 177 million citizens are hungry for improved air connectivity. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth remains strong despite the double whammy of falling oil prices and sustained violence by Boko Haram militants. As national income rises, so does the demand for flights.

Air passenger numbers in the country spiked more than 20% to 21 million last year, ending the slump that followed the crash of Dana Air Flight 992 in June 2012. Some 163 lives were lost in that tragedy, turning the spotlight once again on Nigeria's chequered but improving air safety record.

While he is bullish on the country's long-term prospects, Bankole does not downplay the challenges currently facing West Africa's largest market. He points to the disjointed airport infrastructure in Lagos as one of the biggest annoyances for local operators.

"We have the main international airport – Murtala Muhammed International Airport –and there is another private airport called MMA2 that is under a build, operate and transfer contract," he explained. Though located adjacent to one another, the latter domestic facility is run independently and has no transfer facilities for onward international flights.

"The things that need to be in place for domestic passengers to connect to international flights are not there yet. They need to go through security and go all the way back [into the terminal]. There is a lot of traffic sometimes."

For now, most of Med-View's passengers originate or disembark in the Lagos catchment area, so the infrastructure problem is manageable. But that could change as the airline grows, and there is no shortage of other challenges in the local market.

The Ebola crisis was one recent shock to the system. "There was a big cut-down in passengers on the west coast [of Africa]," Bankole said. "For a couple of months it was a very serious problem. Thank God, things are going back to normal."

Corruption is also an ever-present worry, benefiting the privileged few in government at the expense of wider commercial spoils. Transparency International placed Nigeria 136th out of 175 countries in its 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index. Incoming president Muhammadu Buhari was elected on an anti-corruption ticket, but delivering change will not be an easy task.

Fraudulent conduct has, indeed, been widely blamed for the historic under-performance of Nigeria's aviation sector relative to its economic might.

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Former flag-carrier, Nigeria Airways, ceased operations in 2003 amid claims that more than $400 million had gone missing at the state-owned company between 1983 and 1999. Would-be successor Virgin Nigeria Airways also ended badly, with Virgin Group president Sir Richard Branson selling his stake in the carrier and accusing the government of "Mafioso-style" behaviour.

Today, the closest thing Nigeria has to a national carrier is Arik Air, which deploys 26 aircraft on domestic, regional and intercontinental flights.

But, despite being the market leader, it too has encountered setbacks. National fuel shortages wrought havoc on Arik's 120 daily flights earlier this year, prompting widespread delays and cancellations. The airline also suspended its Dubai service in May after less than one year of operations, blaming intense competition with the Gulf carriers. Med-View will not find it any easier to make money on the route.

With so many challenges in the local market, it is little wonder that Bankole keeps all options on the table for the future. He even opened the door to FastJet at the IATA AGM, promising to give it "the best window and opportunity" for setting up a Nigerian subsidiary.

FastJet had previously advanced on the country through a memorandum of understanding with Red 1 Airways. Now that those talks have stalled, FastJet chief executive Ed Winter says he is open to other Nigerian joint ventures – but only if "100% convinced that the entity is properly funded… and it has full political support".

The low-cost boss has his own personal experience of disappointment in Lagos. Bankole's challenge is to convince him, and others, that Med-View holds the key to unlocking Nigeria's potential. ■

Experience the key for Bankole

Muneer Bankole has a wealth of experience in the aviation industry. He worked for the defunct Nigeria Airways for about 30 years – his last assignment with the carrier as country manager in Saudi Arabia.

After the Nigerian Government liquidated Nigeria Airways in 2003, Bankole ventured into the travel agency business. "That created an opportunity for me to take people from Nigeria to Mecca for the Hajj through Ethiopian Airlines and EgyptAir, and later with Emirates on charter flights," he explained.

"I became known by many groups in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. So I decided to set up an airline in 2004. I began leasing aircraft from Air Atlantic. I started operating charter flights to take people to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj. I did pretty well for nine years and, in 2012, I launched scheduled flight services in Nigeria."

Med-View Airline now has around 350 employees and transports 40,000 to 45,000 passengers monthly. It generates more than $30 million per year and, according to Bankole, has a 20% profit margin.

For Bankole, finding financing is one of the major problems he faces to expand his company. "Aviation is a capital intensive business, which is why we are trying to go public now," he said. "We are in the process of putting our company on the listed market. We want to bring in more investors and more partners."

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Med-View's management is contemplating registering the company on the Lagos Stock Exchange. "We are already talking to the market. We have hired a consultant working on this project," Bankole confirmed.

"I started the business (Med-View Airline) with my colleague in Saudi Arabia. He is a Saudi national. We are now looking for more private placement. We are asking more investors to join us. Then we will go public and be listed on the stock exchange."

Med-View also wants to establish new partnerships with African airlines such as Ethiopian Airlines, South African Airways and Kenya Airways. Bankole believes that African carriers have to forge a strong partnership.

"Ethiopian Airlines is a leading airline in Africa. It is globally competitive. It has a very successful history. I was talking to its CEO, Tewolde Gebremariam, at the IATA AGM and I was telling him that he needed to share his airline's success story with its African brothers. Ethiopian has very good facilities – it has flight simulators that we could use. It has a very good maintenance background. It is good at training aviation personnel so it needs to reach other African airlines.

"We go far away to get maintenance and training services. That is what we have been talking about with Gebremariam. African airlines need to strengthen their partnerships," Bankole concluded.

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DLC 482

The airfreight scene in East Africa is always busy. **Tom Pleasant** *reports on the latest developments.*

Obama sparks the freight of expectation

US president Barack Obama's attendance at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2015 in Kenya this July has led to aviation companies clamouring for direct Kenya-US flights to boost the local and regional air cargo industry.

Jared Oswago, divisional manager at Kenyan ground-handler Siginon Aviation, said that direct cargo flights would attract other airlines and businesses to Kenya in the same way they do in South Africa. But such flights would also require a significant upgrade in cargo security to meet international standards.

"Currently, we're exporting cargo to the US through various connecting flights," Oswago explained. "The multiple connections make the trip longer and compromises on-time performance, as there may be connection delays or missed connections. Handling in the hubs also exposes the cargo [to mistakes], which can reduce or degrade the quality, while also increasing the threat of pilferage."

As interest in air cargo to and from Africa has grown, international carriers and regulators have become increasingly demanding over product care throughout the entire supply chain. Stakeholders, such as regulators and airlines, now frequently audit ground-handlers to gauge their level of security preparedness, but still they want more.

Now, the move is towards driving verification further up the supply chain, to the shipment's source. For instance, in the case of flowers, airlines want to verify the cargo at the farm, and then ensure it remains 'sterile' during transit to the airport, while on the aircraft and then on to its final destination.

David Kiptum, Siginon Aviation's safety and security manager, said: "The default is to pre-empt and prevent security lapses, rather than focusing on curative responses. There's a lot more profiling and moving players to a 'known shipper regime' with a preference for individuals who are regulated agents."

Sanjeev Gadhia: "We wait for business to go up before resuming our operations."

He added: "Terrorism is a global problem that is being collectively handled by all stakeholders. All the players at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) have taken on the responsibility to tackle this issue. We frequently engage with regulators, law enforcement agencies, airport operators, catering, airlines, civil authorities and other government agencies, to share information and so heighten security awareness."

Kiptum said that investment into modern security equipment and rigorous staff-training programmes have helped to ensure greater vigilance, which in turn has greatly reduced security incidences, and improved customer confidence.

In addition, Siginon recently completed a new $10 million air cargo terminal at JKIA. It is equipped with the latest technology, such as cargo-screening machines, and located on the airport apron to ensure the warehouses remain 'sterile' and that access is restricted only to authorised individuals and vehicles.

Elsewhere in Kenya, Nairobi-based all-cargo carrier, Astral Aviation, has suspended flights to the remote Lokichar basin, where recent oil-extraction efforts have stalled.

Lokichar is in the middle of the Turkana Desert in the Rift Valley, 550km northeast of Nairobi. Until recently, it was a backwater, but the UK's Tullow Oil company discovered oil in the area in 2011. This led to a demand for freighters to fly in drilling and other associated equipment.

However, the recent global collapse in oil prices, due to Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oversupply, has made the profitability of such an enterprise unsustainable. Tullow is, therefore, scaling back its operations in the area as part of a wider move to cut costs on global oil exploration.

Astral started a weekly cargo flight to Lokichar's Kapese airstrip in June 2014, using a Fokker F27 freighter. It had planned to increase its presence on the route by introducing a larger aircraft twice a week, once the airstrip had finished being expanded this November.

Astral CEO, Sanjeev Gadhia, said: "We have pulled out of the Lokichar route for the time being as we wait for business to go up before resuming our operations."

Gadhia said the freighter has now been diverted to Djibouti, where the airline has partnered with a local airline to transport cargo in the Horn of Africa. However, he remained optimistic that the Lokichar service would resume once oil prices began to climb again.

Astral Fokker F27 and the HQ of Siginon, the Kenyan ground-handling company.

"This is just a short break and we expect to resume our business partnership with Tullow once there is enough cargo to transport," he said.

This won't be the last such move by freighter operators in Africa. The oil and gas industry is a regular customer for freighters to ship urgent and/or bulky parts to oil wells. Air cargo is expensive though, more so than land or sea cargo. With oil now at around $45 a barrel – half of what it was 18 months ago – we can expect similar decisions to be made across the continent should prices continue to fall.

Forecasts suggest it will be late 2016 at the earliest before there is any growth at all. Even that is considered wildly optimistic by some as sanctions against Iran's oil fields are expected to be lifted around that time, swelling supply and depressing prices further.

Meanwhile, Air Djibouti, which went bankrupt in 2002, has returned to active service by first launching all-cargo, rather than passenger, flights. The state-owned national carrier had its first freighter flight on August 2. The leased Fokker 27 aircraft flew from Djibouti to Hargeisa, Somaliland and now more flights are planned.

Dawit Michael Gebre-Ab, the airline's senior director of strategic planning, said the carrier aims to handle 1,000 tonnes of freight by the end of December. Future destinations will include Ghana, Mogadishu, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda and Yemen. Shipments are expected to include high-value electronic goods and temperature-sensitive pharmaceuticals, as well as spare parts for the oil and gas industry, Gebre-Ab explained.

■ **Page 30: Air Djibouti flies again**

The SAAF's Rooivalk combat helicopters have undertaken their first offensive missions in the DRC on behalf of the United Nations, painted in the UN's all-white colour scheme.

South Africa has five Atlas Oryx helicopters operating in DRC.

The South African Air Force's involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo over recent years has shown up a major weakness in the force's capabilities, but has also potentially given a new lease of life to a home-grown weapon system. **Alan Dron** *reports.*

WHY THE SAAF NEEDS A BIG LIFT

For more than a decade, South Africa has contributed to peacekeeping efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Contributing both troops on the ground and a small, but important air component, it has been responsible for helping rid the troubled central African nation of one of its most feared insurgent groups.

The first South African Air Force (SAAF) deployment to the DRC took place in 2003 in the form of two Atlas Oryx medium transport helicopters (MTH) to the Ituri/Bunia area in the east of the huge central African country. This was a bilateral agreement with French forces, supported by the United Nations and lasting just two weeks. During this intervention operation the Oryx –remanufactured and upgraded versions of the Aérospatiale Puma – were utilised as trooping and medium transport platforms.

The next deployment to the DRC was not until 2007, when two Oryx were sent to a forward operating base in Kamina, again to fly typical trooping and transport tasks in the unstable Goma region in the east of the country. This element then relocated to Goma in 2009.

This latter deployment was strengthened with three further Oryx, which were joined for the first time by South Africa's indigenous Rooivalk combat helicopters, three of which were engaged in operations.

As well as the aircraft, the SAAF contingent operated a variety of ground support vehicles, air rescue support services, cargo-handling equipment and tracking and communication equipment.

Currently, the South African Aviation Unit in the DRC numbers 140 personnel. The five Oryx are assets of the force commander in terms of trooping and medium transport tasks. The Rooivalk, on the other hand, is a specific tool for the force commander in offensive military actions relating to the utilisation of the MONUSCO force intervention brigade (FIB). MONUSCO is the UN peacekeeping mission to the DRC.

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The 3,000-strong FIB, comprising South African, Tanzanian and Malawian troops, was the United Nations' first unit to be given an offensive operations mandate against armed groups threatening peace in the eastern DRC.

The Rooivalk is currently utilised in the combat reconnaissance and close air support roles to assist both the FIB and DRC Government forces in offensive actions against armed groups destabilising the east of the country.

Supporting the helicopters in the testing environment of the DRC has been the responsibility of what a South African National Defence Force (SANDF) spokesman described as "a small but very professional and effective" technical team in Goma .

"They have maintained a 100% serviceability record for the last two years. One of the Oryx helicopters was shot at and one of its internal fuel tanks was punctured. This was repaired and the aircraft was serviceable within four hours."

A recurring difficulty since the start of South Africa's involvement in the DRC has been transporting heavy equipment to and from the country. The SAAF's largest airlifter is the Lockheed Martin C-130BZ Hercules, which has limitations. This has necessitated the chartering – at considerable cost – of specialist civilian heavy-lift aircraft.

"The C-130 Hercules was never built as a strategic or heavy-lift aircraft," said a SANDF spokesman. "It is at best a medium transporter and in the case of the utilisation in the DRC, a medium sustainment platform. The joint operations division utilises the C-130 to transport medium-size cargo to the mission area.

"Joint operations utilises Ilyushin Il-76, Antonov An-124 and other aircraft similar in size to the C-130 chartered from different companies in South Africa to transport equipment heavier than 15tonnes, as well as equipment that does not fit the dimensions of the payload.

"No SAAF C-130 will be permanently based in the mission area – there are no such requests from the UN, as the type of trooping required does not suit a fixed-wing aircraft. However, the C-130 will transport equipment between Goma and other airfields in the mission area. The bigger aircraft [Il-76 and An-124] cannot land at Goma due to the all-up weight restrictions of the airfield."

Continued on Page 56

The SAAF's Lockheed Martin C-130BZs have been used for transport missions to central Africa, but civilian heavy-lift aircraft have had to be chartered to accommodate outsize, bulky cargoes.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 54

One major success of the SAAF operation in the DRC, he said, had been the first use in combat of the Rooivalk. "The Rooivalk was instrumental in the defeat/demise of the M23 rebel group in the eastern DRC. The effect of close air support to the FIB on the stronghold of the M23 was devastating. Cannon fire and missile fire destroyed its headquarters, which contributed to the disappearance of the M23 from the eastern DRC."

The Rooivalk has a nose-mounted 20mm cannon and routinely carries pods of 70mm rockets on its stub wings.

"The [Rooivalks'] current missions include combat air patrols, combat reconnaissance patrols and combat escort of MONUSCO air assets on other missions."

Now, the Rooivalk's performance may see it being further developed. It has a growing reputation for maintainability and reliability despite the challenging conditions.

Although well-regarded by observers, only 12 Rooivalks were produced, equipping a single SAAF squadron. It also took many years to be deemed fully operational, a factor in its failure to win export orders despite attracting interest from several air arms.

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Specialist South African defence website defenceWeb reported in August that the country's Department of Defence and Military Veterans is supporting a study for the possible upgrade of the current Rooivalk 1F baseline model, replacing some obsolescent on-board equipment. The study is also looking at a much more extensive development, effectively resulting in a 'Rooivalk Mk2' around 2025 or beyond. Cost is likely to be the deciding factor.

"The current Rooivalk Mk1F baseline as deployed will require a midlife upgrade due to future additional functional requirements," said Denel in its annual report. "Denel is in discussions with the SAAF regarding the Rooivalk roadmap to define and upgrade the current Rooivalk baseline, as well as the possible development and manufacturing of additional aircraft at a Rooivalk Mk2 baseline."

Meanwhile, one of the biggest lessons learned from the extensive deployments to the DRC had been the requirement for more transport assets, said the SANDF spokesman. "The SANDF does not have a strategic/heavy-lift capability and if South Africa is to take part in future operations in Africa, it should have that capability. As far as the acquisition, renewed or otherwise, is concerned the joint operations division, as the end user, does not get involved in that process."

Other challenges had included the long logistics lines, which made proper support difficult, together with the service schedules for the helicopters, as flying hours are unpredictable and based on operational requirements. "Technicians can do services up to the 400hr service; thereafter, major services must be done in South Africa."

Agreeing on the requirement for a heavy-lift

The Rooivalk's standard armament options during the DRC operations have been its 20mm cannon and pods of 70mm unguided rockets. It was instrumental in disabling the M23 rebel group.

capability is David Maynier, the country's opposition Democratic Alliance Party shadow defence and military veterans minister. But the opposition defence spokesman says that South African parliamentarians have been prevented from getting a clear view of how the Congo mission has progressed by the government's refusal to give information.

"My understanding is that the SANDF air component – particularly the Rooivalks – have performed very well. The Oryx seem also to have performed extremely well." Personnel had done a fine job, despite being stretched, he said.

"However, if one looks at fixed-wing aircraft, it's well known that the SAAF has very limited lift capability. As a result, an enormous amount of money is spent on chartering aircraft to make up the heavy lift capability to the DRC and South Sudan.

"The whole question of the SAAF's lift capability is a huge concern and, as a result of our deployments not only to the DRC and South Sudan… it's a priority to acquire lift capability."

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Ironically, South Africa was one of the first export customers for the Airbus A400M heavy transport, but its order for eight was cancelled in 2009 on grounds of cost escalation and production delays. However, Airbus has continued to source work packages for the aircraft from South African companies and remains hopeful that an A400M order will eventually be forthcoming.

Its main rival will be Lockheed Martin's C-130J, the current and hugely updated version of the venerable C-130BZs that have been operated by South Africa for more than 50 years. There are eight C-130BZs still in service (although not all are believed to be serviceable at any one time) and Lockheed Martin has said that the C-130J could handle 90% of South Africa's airlift needs.

Lockheed Martin has said that the SAAF requires between six to eight C-130Js to fulfil its needs and has warned that it will take around three years from contract signing to delivery.

The C-130J's main weakness is an inability to handle particularly bulky or outsize loads. The Oryx helicopters, for example, require major dismantling to fit inside its cargo hold.

Late in 2013, the SANDF was reported to be actively considering the purchase of at least three Ilyushin Il-76s (probably second-hand examples) to supplement the C-130s. However, this would require a major investment not only in the aircraft themselves but also in creating a maintenance support 'tail' and no order for the type has yet been forthcoming.

Maynier admitted that it was difficult for him, or other members of the standing committee on defence, to give detailed comments on the deployment to the DRC because of a near total blackout of information from the South African Department of Defence (DoD). His committee had never been briefed on the DRC involvement or undertaken an oversight visit there.

The DoD had also refused for six years to brief parliament on defence acquisition, he said.

Reasons given for the lack of information were unclear, he said, but included national security and the risk of compromising acquisition processes.

However, he added: "There's clearly an acquisition process under way to acquire a transport capability and it's budgeted for, because there's evidence of the acquisition process in the estimates of national expenditure." There remained no details on what form this acquisition would take.

Ironically, there was no disagreement between the government and opposition that a lift capability was required, he added. ■

Super Tucano propels into the African market

A number of African countries have turned their attention to the Embraer EMB-314 A-29 Super Tucano aircraft. **Jon Lake** *looks at the reasons why.*

For many years, some African air forces have been guilty of letting considerations of national prestige govern their combat aircraft procurement.

In many cases, supersonic fighter interceptors have been purchased or acquired which have had little tactical or operational relevance, but which have looked good in the flypasts accompanying the celebrations of various anniversaries of independence or liberation.

Often these aircraft have flown very little before being grounded by spares shortages or support difficulties. Where they have been kept active, they have usually proved unsuitable for the asymmetric and counter insurgency operations that have been required.

More recently, a number of African countries have been making more intelligent procurement decisions, seeking simpler, more cost-effective and more flexible multi-role and counter insurgency aircraft, which are cheaper to buy and to support, and which are easier to maintain and to operate in African conditions.

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One such aircraft that has attracted growing interest in Africa is the Embraer EMB-314 A-29 Super Tucano.

Purpose-built for light attack, counter insurgency (COIN), close air support, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions in low-threat environments, as well as for advanced pilot training, the A-29 is designed to operate in high temperatures and from rugged, semi-prepared forward airfields.

The Super Tucano is extremely manoeuvrable, but has a low heat, visual and noise signature, and is fitted with radar and missile warning receivers, chaff/flare dispensers, and Kevlar armour, enhancing survivability.

The aircraft incorporates modern avionics, sensors and weapons systems, and has a night-vision goggle (NVG)-compatible 'glass cockpit' with hands-on-throttle-and-stick (HOTAS) controls. The aircraft has five hardpoints for up to 1,550kg (3,300lb) of weapons and stores and is able to deliver a range of precision-guided munitions, including the joint direct attack munition (JDAM) and small diameter bomb, as well as bombs, cluster bombs, and unguided rockets. It can be fitted with 20mm cannon pods, though it is already fitted with a pair of internal, wing-mounted .50 calibre machine guns with 200 rounds of ammunition per gun.


A29 Super Tucano light attack aircraft.

The Air Force of Burkina Faso received three A-29B aircraft in September 2011 and uses them primarily for border patrol missions.

Mauritania has augmented its three or four ex-French EMB 312 Tucano aircraft with three Super Tucanos. Negotiations for the acquisition of the EMB 314 began in December 2011 and the first two aircraft were delivered by December 2012. They were fitted with a FLIR Safire III infrared turret for border surveillance operations. The third Mauritania Air Force A-29B Super Tucano was shown at the Paris Air Show in 2013.

The National Air Force of Angola ordered six aircraft for border surveillance. Deliveries, originally scheduled to begin in early 2012, actually began on January 31 2013.

The Senegalese Air Force became the fourth African nation to order the Super Tucano, signing up for three aircraft at the 2013 LAAD defence and security international exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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In March 2015 the Brazilian Defense Ministry donated three refurbished EMB-312 Tucanos to the Mozambique Air Force, and Brazil is to finance a mid- to long-term loan to allow a Mozambican procurement of three A-29s on easy payment terms.

The Ghana Air Force ordered five aircraft in 2015 for use at a flying school that is to be built near Tamale, Ghana's third city. An intention to procure six EMB 314 aircraft was announced by Ghana's President, John Dramani Mahama, on November 20 2014, and he confirmed an order for five on February 18 2015.

The $88 million contract, which also includes logistics support and a training system for pilots and mechanics in Ghana, was signed at the Paris Airshow in June 2015. The first aircraft is expected to arrive in the second half of 2016, and it will be used for advanced training, border surveillance and internal security missions.

Another contract signed at the same Paris Airshow covered the supply of six A-29 aircraft for the Force Aérienne de la Republique du Mali (the Mali Air Force) for advanced training, border surveillance and internal security missions.

Further African nations that have been reported as showing an interest in the EMB 314 Super Tucano include Equatorial Guinea, Libya (for up to 24 aircraft) and Nigeria.

By contrast, armed versions of the rival Beechcraft T-6 Texan II have so far enjoyed less success. The Royal Moroccan Air Force has taken delivery of 24 T-6Cs, but uses these for training, while Mexico has also acquired six T-6Cs. The Hellenic Air Force had previously taken delivery of 20 armed versions of the T-6A. The AT-6B Wolverine is a new, further improved derivative of the T-6 aimed at much the same market as the A-29. ■

Oscar Nkala *and* **Jon Lake** *look at the rise and rise of the Força Aérea Nacional de Angola (FANA) – the Angolan Air Force.*

Angola's goal: a FANAtastic force

The Angolan Air Force was originally established on January 21 1976 as the Força Aérea Popular de Angola/Defesa Aérea e Anti aérea (FAPA/DAA – People's Air Force of Angola/Air and Anti-aircraft Defence).

Established along Soviet lines and equipped with aircraft supplied by the USSR, Eastern European nations and Cuba, the FAPA/DAA made extensive use of 'advisors' from these countries, and sent many of its own personnel abroad for training.

The air force was extensively engaged in the civil war, which lasted from November 1975 until 2002, and in defending Angolan airspace against South African incursions during South African Air Force operations against South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) guerrillas.

Large numbers of the aircraft delivered to the Força Aérea Popular de Angola, which was renamed as the Força Aérea Nacional de Angola by 2007, are no longer operational, including the Sukhoi Su-24 'Fencer' and Su-25 'Frogfoot' fighter-bombers and all of the Hercules (six C-130Ks, three L-100-20s, and two L-100-30s).

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Perhaps most surprisingly, the eight Sukhoi 'Flankers' delivered from 1998 (six Su-27s and two Su-27UBs from surplus Belarusian stocks) are no longer operational. Initially flown by Ukrainian pilots and supported by Ukrainian ground crew, one was shot down by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) on November 19 2000, and the remainder gradually became un-airworthy, so that by 2015, FlightGlobal's World Air Forces census listed just one aircraft as remaining active.

Angola has kept a squadron of about 14 ex-Slovakian Sukhoi Su-22M4s operational. These aircraft were upgraded in 2008, receiving new mission computers, embedded GPS inertial (EGI) laser designators, and new cockpit displays. The upgrade was undertaken by Poland's WZL-2.

In recent years, Angola's air force has taken delivery of six Embraer Super Tucano multi-role light attack/trainer aircraft originally ordered from Embraer in March 2013, as well as six new Cessna 172R elementary training aircraft.

Possible Order of Battle

21st (Transport Helicopter) Regiment
Luena Air Base?
1 Esquadrilha de Helicópteros (SA315/IAR-316, SA342M, AB212 & SA365M)
2 Esquadrilha do Bombardeiros (Mi-8, Mi-17 and AS532)

22nd (Combat Helicopter) Regiment
Huambo Air Base, Albano Machado Airport?
3 Esquadrilha de Helicópteros (Mi-25/35, AS565AA, AS565UA & SA342M)
4 Esquadrilha do Bombardeiros (Mi-24/25/35)
Possibly ex-Base Aérea No3, Negage

23rd (Air Transport) Regiment,
Base Aérea No.1, Luanda '4 de Fevereiro' (Belas)
5 Esquadrilha de Transportes (An-12, An-26, An-32, C-212, Do-28)
6 Esquadrilha de Transportes (An-72, An-74, Il-76T)
7 Esquadrilha VIP (Boeing 707, Embraer ERJ-135BJ, Yak-40)
Esquadrilha de Reconhecimento (EMB-314, Do28)

24th (Training) Regiment
Menongue Air Base?
8 Esquadrilha de Treinamento (EMB-312, PC-7, PC-9)
9 Esquadrilha de Treinamento (L-29 Delfin, L-39ZA,
10 Esquadrilha de Treinamento (Cessna 172 and Z-142C)
Cessnas and Zlins probably now at Lobito

25th (Fighter Aviation) Regiment
Base Aérea No.2, Lubango (Mukanka)
11 Esquadrilha da Caças (MiG-21bis, MiG-21M, and MiG-21U)
12 Esquadrilha da Caças (MiG-23ML and MiG-23UB)
13 Esquadrilha da Caças (Su-27 and Su-27UB)
MiG-21 probably WFU

26th (Fighter Bomber) Regiment,
Base Aérea No.5, Catumbela (Benguela '17 de Setembro')
14 Esquadrilha Caça-Bombardeiros (Su-24MK)
15 Esquadrilha Caça-Bombardeiros (Su-22M-4K and Su-22UM-3K)
16 Esquadrilha Caça-Bombardeiros (Su-25K and Su-25UBK)
Esquadrilha de Treinamento Avançado (L-29, L-39)
L-29, L-39 possibly ex-Menongue Air Base, Su-24 and Su-25 probably WFU

Escola Militar de Formação Aeronáutica
Base Aérea No.4, Lobito
Esquadrilha Zlin (Zlin 142)
Esquadrilha Cessna (T-41, PC-7)
Esquadrilha Alouette (SA316B Alouette III)

Location unknown
Maritime patrol squadron (CASA C212 MPA)

Ageing: New heavy-lift transporters with greater capacity are being sought to replace the Angolan Air Force's Antonov-12.

The latter aircraft have been acquired as part of an intensive new in-country training programme for military aviation personnel. This resulted in the graduation of 61 engineers in 2013, together with the first five fully locally-trained MiG-23 fighter pilots. In 2014, 61 more graduated from the Lobito Military Aeronautical Training School included 10 pilots – five to fly the MiG 23 fighters.

Angola also plans to upgrade the air force's support facilities, opening a new aircraft and helicopter maintenance hangar at the Lobito facility.

Angola has invested heavily in its transport and logistics infrastructure, including airfields, paying the bill from the country's sovereign wealth fund, the Fundo Soberano de Angola (FSDEA). Its wealth comes from Angola's commodity exports, principally the 100,000 barrels of crude oil sold abroad each day. Angola has already paved 31 new runways – and will soon have the largest airport on the continent. Airport improvement will benefit both military and civil aviation.

Angola's internal security situation has remained stable since the signing of the April 2002 peace deal, which ended 27 years of civil war. This lengthy period of peace has led senior officers and politicians to use the Angolan armed forces to support United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions in Africa.

In order to support the Angolan armed forces as they prepare to take up their first UN mission in the Central Africa Republic (CAR) the air force was taking delivery of a number of Russian-made helicopters and air defence systems this year.

The new helicopters will support a deployment by approximately 1,800 Angolan servicemen, and will be flown by a group of Angolan pilots who have recently graduated from an intensive specialised, six-year helicopter pilot training programme in Russia.

"We are creating the necessary conditions to enable the Angolan staff to support the UN peacekeeping mission," explained General Sachipengo Nunda, chief of staff of the Forças Armadas Angolanas (FAA).

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In the longer term, the Angolan Air Force is said to be looking to procure new training, fighter, and heavy transport aircraft, though the recent acquisition of new EMB-314s and ex-Peruvian EMB-312s may have taken some of the urgency out of the requirement to acquire a replacement for the L-39 Albatros jet trainer.

More pressing is Angola's requirement for a new multi-role fighter. The country has already placed a further order of 12 second-hand ex-Indian Air Force Sukhoi Su-30MK fighter jets from Russian state arms exporter Rosoboronexport. The aircraft belong to the Irkut Corporation but are being stored at the 558th Aircraft Repair Plant at Baranovichi in Belarus, where they will be refurbished and upgraded with new communications, avionics, electronic warfare and armament systems before being delivered to Angola.

Angola also has a requirement for a heavy-lift transport aircraft to replace its already retired Hercules and dwindling fleet of Antonov An-12 'Cub' aircraft.

The two most likely candidates would seem to be the Embraer KC-390 and the advanced 'J model' of the Lockheed Martin C-130J Hercules.

Angola was one of two African countries (with South Africa) to send representatives to the roll-out of the new Embraer KC-390 heavy-lift transport aircraft at the company's Gaviao Peixoto factory in Sao Paulo on October 21 2014.

With a maximum payload of 26tonnes, including 80 troops or 64 paratroopers, three Humvee-sized vehicles or a Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk utility helicopter, the KC-390 is also equipped to act as an air-to-air refuelling tanker, and has provision for an electro-optical/infrared (EO/IR) pod for secondary ISR and search-and-rescue (SAR) missions.

As well as offering a bigger payload than the C-130J, the KC-390 also enjoys a higher operating altitude, and much faster speed.

The Angolan Air Force has also evaluated the C-130J Hercules and is believed to be analysing the results of its evaluations with a view to ordering one or other of the competing airlifters. ■

Angola plays the SIM card to boost training

At Albertville in the French Alps, Thales and SAF Helicopteres, a specialist in mountain aerial work and helicopter emergency service (HEMS) operations, share a training facility equipped with two Thales Reality H full flight simulators (FFS) configured for the EC135 T2+ and AS350 B3e helicopters. Report by **David Oliver**.

The AS350 B3 simulator viewed from the Instructor Operating Station (IOS).

The EASA certified training centre is the first in Europe to provide full flight training and simulation for the AS350 B3 type helicopter. Thales and SAF share a building, maintenance and spare parts, and a partnership agreement allows each company to offer up to 2,000 training hours per year on the two Level B/D FTD 3 FFSs mounted on 6-axes Hexia all-electrical motion systems with Image Generation System ThalesView 70 and a computer generated environment for the management of the virtual animations. The databases cover an area in southern France stretching from the Alps to Marseille.

SAF Helicopteres, which has a fleet of more than 30 helicopters, is an approved training organization (ATO) which offers wet and dry lease courses tailored to customers which includes initial and recurrent type and instrument ratings, mountain flying and NVG, SAR and HEMS mission training.

In addition to civil and commercial clients from Europe, India and China, the training centre attracts several parapublic operators including the Angolan National Police

Angola is twice the size of Texas, with over 3,000 miles of land boundaries and 1,000 miles along the Atlantic Ocean coastline.

The approach to its great central plateau is marked by the west-central highlands the highest peak of which is the 2,620m (8,600ft) Mount Moco in the Serra da Chella mountain range.

Established in 1992 the Angolan National Police Force Helicopter Unit's exclusive Eurocopter fleet currently include six Dauphin AS365 N2s with emergency medical service capabilities and 15 AS350 B2/B3 Ecureuils used primarily for surveillance missions. A contract was signed in 2009 for 10 AS350 B3s, selected for its superior operational capability and ability to operate in hot, high and dusty conditions, for delivery between June 2009 and May 2011, making the Angola National Police Force one of the best-equipped law enforcement agencies in Africa.

A total of 41 Angolan police pilots have been trained at Albertville to date for AS350 B3 Type Rating. These include a number of instructor pilots who now man the Instructor Operating Station (IOS) teaching their own training courses.

The Angolan Aeronautical Information Centre of the National Exploration Company for Airports and Air Navigation (ENANA) is using a new ATC 3D 240º flight simulator for training, testing and validation procedures for national air traffic control. **Oscar Nkala** *reports.*

The flight simulator was inaugurated late last year at ENANA headquarters in the capital Luanda by transport minister Augusto da Silva Tomás. It is now being used to train candidates on air traffic information, special emergency handling techniques and the study and development of new ATC methods and working procedures.

The simulator is equipped with a range of pre-programmed, automated events in order to reduce to limit human intervention in their operation. The system also emulates the environment of the control tower and air traffic control IFR (Instrument and Flight Rules) and associated equipment.

The delivery came eight months after the agency took delivery of a new Future Air Navigation Systems (FANS) data link avionic air traffic management system which has since been deployed to support aircraft flights over the Luanda Flight Information Region (FIR).

According to the manufacturers SITA Technologies, aircraft using the FANS controller-pilot data-link communications (CPDLC) system will provide a more accurate and reliable communication link between aircraft crews and air traffic controllers in the Angolan airspace of the African Indian Ocean Flight Region (AIO-FR).

The system uses an automatic dependence surveillance contract (ADS-C) tracking device to relay precise aircraft positions back to a video display platform on the ground support system. In addition, ADS-C improves the surveillance of aircraft and its reporting systems by issuing automatic digital reports on aircraft positions, which are relayed to air traffic controllers without the need of any voice reporting from the flight crew.

The CPDLC system also replaces routine voice communications between flight crews and air traffic controllers by allowing the two sides to communicate using standard ATC messages in a form similar to email.

Chinook gets a boost from Morocco

The Boeing CH-47 Chinook heavy-lift helicopter is set to re-enter service with the Royal Moroccan Air Force (RMAF). **Jon Lake** *reports.*

Three ex-US Army Reserve CH-47D aircraft were delivered to the port of Tangier on Saturday August 15, arriving on board the roll-on/roll-off ship Liberty Pride.

Morocco has already operated the Chinook, having ordered 12 CH-47Cs from Italy's Elicotteri Meridonali during the 1970s. These were delivered in two batches of six in 1979 and 1982, and served with the Escadre Hélicoptère at No1 Air Base at Rabat/Salé.

Most were upgraded to CH-47C(M) standards but serviceability declined, and though some sources suggested that Morocco was still "believed to operate between three and eight surviving CH-47Cs", by the beginning of 2015, the type was no longer in operational service.

Morocco has wanted to boost its heavy-lift helicopter capability for some time, to improve its ability to mount humanitarian aid missions, and for military transport missions, if needed.

On October 26 2009 the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency notified Congress of a possible Foreign Military Sale (FMS) of three CH-47D Chinook helicopters and associated parts, equipment and logistical support to Morocco at an estimated cost of $134 million.

It was announced that the Government of Morocco had

requested a possible sale of three CH-47D Chinook helicopters with six T55-GA-714A turbine engines, two spare T-55-GA-714A engines, and other related systems, spares and services.

However, due to Morocco's budget constraints, the delivery could not be expedited, and since then efforts have been under way to find a more affordable solution.

In the end the United States Army Security Assistance Command (USASAC) put together a package, which included three Chinooks as well as the training of Moroccan crews, tools, publications and spare parts for $78.9 million. Honeywell was to provide T55-GA-714A engines under a separate foreign military sales contract that was announced by the US Department of Defense (DoD) in July 2014.

At the heart of the new deal were three second-hand, ex-US Army Reserve CH-47D helicopters, which underwent a seven-month, $6 million refurbishment at the hands of Columbia Helicopters. This included repainting the aircraft in full Moroccan markings – including military crests, national flags and serial/registration markings – and flight-testing in Morocco.

"At the end of the process, we're going to hand Morocco's air force three aircraft that are completely reconditioned and in excellent shape." said Scott Ellis, director of business development for Columbia Helicopters. "By the time we're finished with the helicopters and present them to Morocco, they'll look just like brand new helicopters."

The refurbishing took about 400 hours per aircraft and included a complete and rigorous inspection, with replacement of any faulty or worn out components. It also covered engine overhauls.

As well as being a US maintenance repair and overhaul (MRO) company, Columbia Helicopters is also the largest commercial operator of Chinook helicopters in the world, having operated the commercial Model 234 Chinook and, more recently, the Boeing CH-47D.

The company's extensive experience in maintaining these heavy-lift helicopters made it a strong contender for the refurbishment of the Chinooks for Morocco.

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The work was undertaken inside a separate, secure 16,000sqft military maintenance hangar within the company's FAA-licensed MRO facility at its headquarters in Aurora in Oregon.

This new facility, totally focused on military helicopter MRO, was officially opened as the company's new Military Maintenance Facility on August 1 2014, and has sufficient space for three maintenance tracks for three Chinook-sized helicopters. The building was previously used for the support and maintenance of ground support equipment.

Columbia Helicopters received final DoD approval to perform work for the US military, as well as export customers, under the FMS programme during the third week of August. With about 40 ex-US military Chinooks already offered for sale, Columbia hopes to win further similar work for future export customers and anticipates business opportunities from US military operators of the Chinook based in the western part of the continental USA.

Columbia Helicopters started work on the Moroccan Chinooks in late August 2014, and the aircraft arrived at its Aurora facility in November. The first of the three helicopters was re-flown in April 2015.

All three helicopters had been rolled out by June, ready for their long sea voyage to Morocco. When they arrived in kingdom, the helicopters were met by a team from Columbia Helicopters, who finished putting them into flight-ready status.

The new Chinooks will restore a much-missed heavy-lift capability to Morocco's helicopter force, which is currently estimated to consist of 25-47 Agusta-Bell AB-205As, between five and 12 AB-206 Jet Rangers, four Bell 212s, two Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawks, 19-23 Aérospatiale SA-342 Gazelles, and 24-26 SA-330 Pumas. ■

The African Business Aviation Association (AfBAA) held its third annual symposium in Addis Ababa in September. **Ella Nethersole and Alan Peaford** *report. Pictures:* **Ian Billinghurst**.

Tarek Ragheb (right) with Ethiopian minister of transport, HE Workneh Gebeyehu, at AfBAA.

Education is a 'must' for business aviation to flourish

Africa's business aviation community is making giant strides in cementing the diverse industry together as it attempts to gain recognition from regulators and governments alike.

It's key message: there needs to be a level playing field with commercial air transport.

Speaking at the AfBAA annual regional symposium in Addis Ababa, founding chairman Tarek Ragheb said: "For us, this is the essence of how this organisation will add value to the business environment here in Africa. To support this school of thought, we think that AfBAA provides a platform, and is also an enabler."

Symposium guest of honour – Ethiopian minister of transport, HE Workneh Gebeyehu – echoed his thoughts. Along with African Union (AU) director, David Kajange, he urged AfBAA to aggressively pursue raising the visibility of business aviation benefits to civil aviation authorities, the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) and other bodies.

"Business aviation is relatively new to the continent in terms of the AU and governments," Kajange said. "It has not been very visible in Africa and its importance is not yet appreciated by policy-makers. We have never had business aviation on our agenda at the AU."

However, recognising that Africa has one of fastest growing economies, Kajange said the continent wanted to raise its competitive position and that business aviation could be the key.

Solomon Gizaw: "There's a massive lack of understanding."

"There are plans to make Africa a manufacturing hub. We want to move manufacturing here and the need to pay attention to business aviation is becoming more important than ever before. It has taken Africa decades to wake up to the fact that business aviation is an indispensible form of transport and to be aware of its contribution to economic growth," he added.

Minister Gebeyehu said there were 20 new aircraft planned for Ethiopia and air operator's certificates were being sought by a number of small operators.

The symposium identified a number of issues that were still halting the growth and effectiveness of business aviation across the continent.

Solomon Gizaw, CEO of Abyssinian Flight Services, AfBAA's 100th member, said: "There's a massive lack of understanding of what it is about – its what you see in the movies and is for rich, lucky people. Of course, we know business aviation is a multiplier of time.

"If you talk about aviation in Ethiopia, you talk about Ethiopian Airlines. We hope the Civil Aviation Authority, airports enterprises and all stakeholders will be able to educate our leaders [about business aviation]. It's my responsibility and that of the business aviation community to teach them what it's all about."

Panellists said that "education, education, education" was key to developing the understanding that governments needed.

Jonathan Deutsch, from Jet Support Services Inc (JSSI) said that education must be across all levels. "We had an example where a replacement engine was held up in customs. Unfortunately they damaged the engine as they tried to sort out what the parts were."

EAN positive about the future

"As a company, we see a bright future in business aviation."
DEDAYO OLAWUYI

Nigerian fixed-based operation (FBO) and maintenance facility, EAN Aviation, was impressed by the turnout at AfBAA and felt positive about business aviation companies coming together to discuss the challenges they face in Africa.

"AfBAA has done well to bring different people together here in Addis Ababa," said Dedayo Olawuyi, head of business intelligence and strategy.

"As a company, we face the same problems as everyone else here – that of permits, government relations and regulations.

"A lot of the regulations that business aviation goes through have been developed for commercial aviation, so it's a tall order to try and get the government to understand that they need to make some changes to benefit the business aviation industry."

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Olawuyi said that, being based in Nigeria, his company also faced challenges with the reduction in oil prices.

"There has been a lull in the market since the price drop and that is primarily because Nigeria is an oil producing country and most of our clients are from oil companies. That means they have to cut costs, which has resulted in reduced flying – so that has affected the business in a way," said Olawuyi.

"Saying that, oil is still where the economy booms, and it is an industry with business aviation demand. In the last two or three years we have found real growth in terms of business aviation in Kenya, Angola and South Africa, as well as Nigeria."

EAN provides 24-hour apron parking support and security for short, mid and long- range aircraft. It deals with 2,500 passengers a month. It is looking to expand next year with its operations and maintenance capabilities.

"Africa is a big focus for us and we hope to open more offices in the region. As yet, we have not decided where," said Olawuyi.

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Earlier this year, the company completely refurbished its FBO VIP lounge at Murtala Muhammed International Airport, following a period of increased customer demand. And, in March 2016, it will once again host the Nigerian Business Aviation Conference (NBAC) in Lagos, following the success of its launch in 2013.

The forum is an event for all interested stakeholders to exchange innovative ideas with a view to providing industry-specific solutions.

"In 2013, more than 200 people from different parts of the industry came together and we expect the same in 2016 – especially as Nigeria has a growth of business aviation operators and more people buying jets," said Olawuyi.

"The country will also have a new government in place, so it will be very interesting to be able to discuss the problems we face in business aviation in Nigeria and Africa generally with any representatives. As a company, we see a bright future in business aviation."

Ayman Khraiban: AfBAA is important.

JETEX FOCUSING ON ALLIED AFRICA

Jetex attended AfBAA interested to hear from key speakers and see how the business aviation industry could come together within Africa.

"We are one of the inaugural members of AfBAA, so it was important to attend here," said Ayman Khraiban, regional sales manager.

The company has been operating since 2005 and its services include ground-handling, aircraft fuelling, concierge services, weather services, and trip planning.

It has an FBO at Al Maktoum International Airport at Dubai World Central, as well as a fixed-base operation (FBO) in Le Bourget, Paris. But Africa is also a region of interest for the company and it is likely to grow.

"Quite clearly, we have a huge interest in the African region," said Khraiban. "While we don't have an FBOs in Africa, we have a lot of supervisory stations and representatives in the continent, where we provide various services including handling, concierge support and permit arrangement.

"We are established in African countries including Congo, Togo, Cameroon, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Burundi, Senegal, and here in Ethiopia."

Africa lands new top aviation show

Tarek Ragheb and Mark Brown sign the MoU at the AfBAA symposium in Addis Ababa.

Africa is to get its own business aircraft show following a deal signed today by the continent's business aviation association, AfBAA, and Times Aerospace, publisher of *African Aerospace*.

The association signed a five-year deal to join forces to initially co-locate the successor to the AfBAA regional symposium – the African Business Aviation Show (ABAS) – with Times Group's successful Aviation Africa summit.

The arrangement will see the two parties working together to develop and expand the concept of a dedicated pan-African aerospace show covering all elements of business and commercial aviation.

Mark Brown, managing director of Times Group said: "This is an exciting time for aviation in Africa and we know there will be great interest in the sector as it grows. We hope that, by incubating the new business aviation show alongside Aviation Africa, it will allow it to develop and become a stand-alone event along the lines of the successful international business aviation events."

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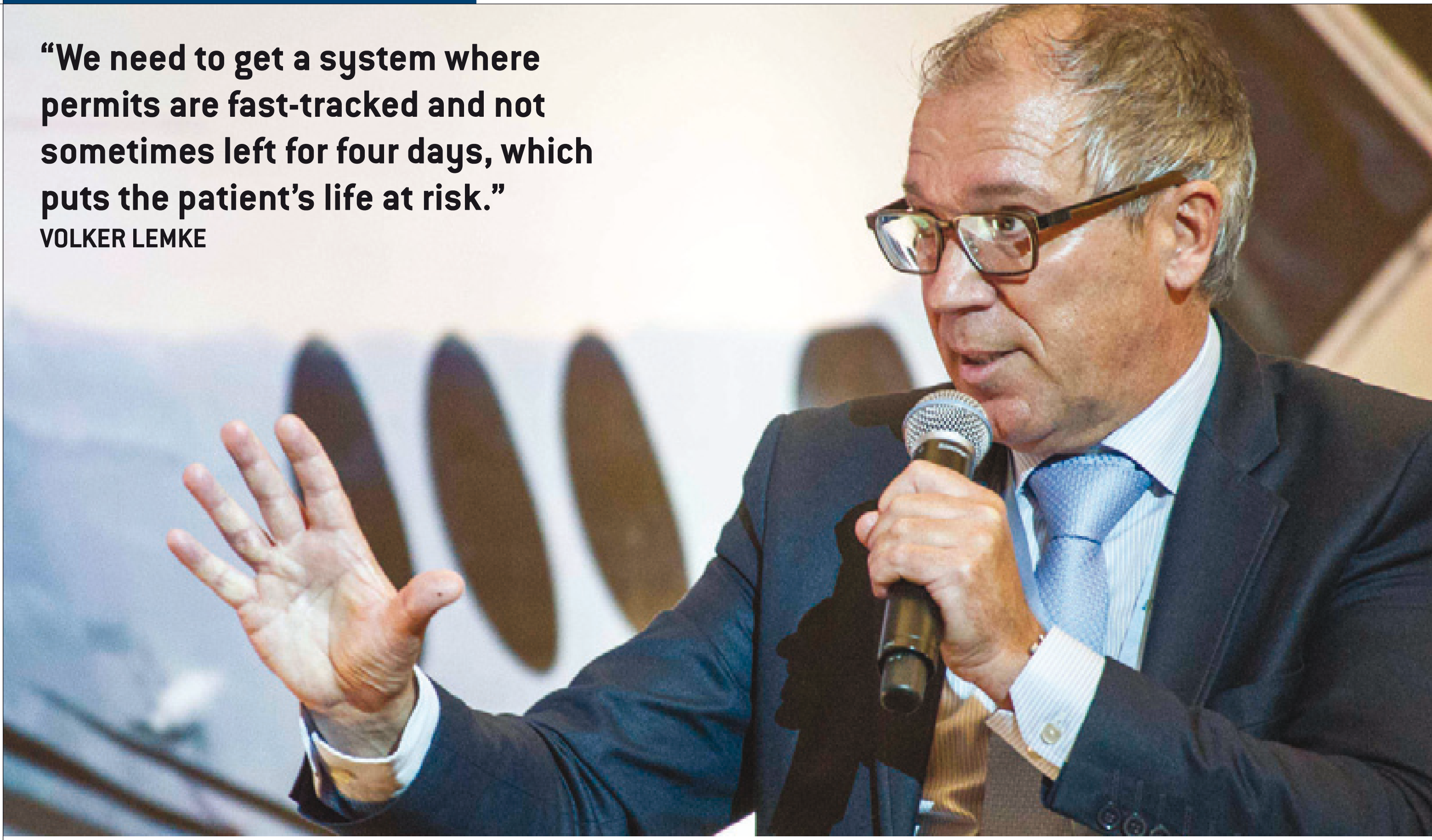
A number of locations are currently under consideration for the first outing of the new ABAS and Aviation Africa. The final location selection will be announced later this year.

The event will extend across three days, incorporating a one-day AfBAA symposium dedicated to the business aviation sector, and a two-day conference covering government and regulatory affairs, as well as commercial aviation. Chalets, booths and a static display of all types of aircraft will add to the exhibition offering.

"Many of the same concerns, such as open skies policies, regulatory issues, human resource management, training and safety, are affecting commercial and business aviation across the continent.

"The combining of the market segments will allow delegates from each sector to exchange experiences, knowledge and ideas," said AfBAA founding chairman Tarek Ragheb.

"In parallel, the one-day symposium and two-day conference will focus on inherent issues associated with each sector.



Samantha Wellard *travels to Nuremburg to meet the world's largest air ambulance fixed-wing operator.*

CAAS 'MUST ACT FASTER' TO SAVE LIVES

Civil aviation authorities in Africa need to develop a way to fast-track permit requests for air ambulance and medevac missions.

That was the message taken to AfBAA in Addis Ababa by the world's largest fixed-wing air ambulance operator.

Headquartered at Albrecht Dürer International Airport, near Nuremberg, FAI Rent-a-Jet is Germany's largest general aviation operator in terms of fleet utilisation, the second largest in fleet size, and the largest Learjet operator outside of the Americas. While the statistics remain impressive, the real marvel comes from its work around the world on life-saving air ambulance missions.

Performing two medical evacuations per day on average last year, and operating on special mission services for the world's largest non-governmental organisation (NGO), FAI predicts a revenue of $45 million from the air ambulance division alone in 2015. The were 778 air ambulance missions in the last 12 months – 124 to African emergencies – and many were into hostile territory.

Volker Lemke, FAI director of sales and marketing, said many missions were put at risk by a lack of awareness of the urgency by some African civil aviation authorities. "We need to get a system where permits are fast-tracked and not sometimes left for four days, which puts the patient's life at risk," he said.

Travel insurance companies pay for the majority of FAI's air ambulance flights, when patients require transportation and a full medical team to escort them back to their home country.

During the air ambulance peak season – over the summer months – each aircraft on average works three-and-a-half missions before touching down at the home base. Lemke continued: "It is up to the operator to optimise his logistics to give good quality and be paid for it."

FAI not only equips each ambulance with the technology to fully care for a patient while in the air, but also provides a medical team to accompany the patient.

Lemke said: "We have five nurses employed full-time as well as a huge pool of around 100 freelancer staff. We insist on on-going clinical practice for these people."

Six of FAI's 21 jets are equipped for special mission services for the world's largest NGO – the UN. On these missions, FAI has provided air support in hostile areas all over the world, including Africa.

Lemke said: "We are well known for being the busiest operator for difficult areas of the world."

FAI not only acts as a medical service and transportation home for those in crisis zones, but it also provides transportation for relief teams going to and from the areas.

FAI was active during last year's Ebola outbreak in Africa. It had three aircraft stationed in the areas most affected, ready to provide medical technology and transportation quickly and efficiently.

However, Lemke was clear that, despite FAI's well-equipped aircraft, it was not able to offer the same amount of care as the military. "Very often we were asked to move out Ebola patients but [for safety reasons] we refused to do that."

Yet FAI continued to provide a service, helping those injured, suffering from other diseases such as Malaria, or, on two occasions, moving Ebola patients within the first 24 hours of contraction, before the patient became contagious.

Aero medical services 'in need of urgent treatment'

Sean Culligan, of Phoenix Aviation Malta (PAM), was at AfBAA highlighting the fact that Africa needs to address its aero-medical solutions.

To stress the difficulties PAM faces in the region, he offered an insight into a conversation he had with one director of civil aviation in a West African country about the fate of a patient.

"I said, 'Sir, if this patient is not brought out he will die' and the director responded, 'If he dies, he dies'. So, as you can imagine, you're lost for words and it's hard to follow up a remark like that while trying to get across the importance of a quick and easy medical solution," he said.

PAM does have a solution for the region, though, as Culligan explained: "Our concept is to have a PAM-African solution of the air ambulance closer to the patient, cutting down on times getting to the patient, which gives us that little extra window in which to negotiate."

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PAM has been working with Nairobi-based Amref Flying Doctors for the last 15 years; it is the largest and most well-known international air ambulance services provider in the region and has been operating there for 58 years.

With PAM aircraft they have been using the ability to travel in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and beyond.

"We need now to spread that more in Africa," said Culligan. "As the provider of aeroplanes, we will work with somebody like Flying Doctors to make that leap."

Culligan said the fleet depends on the location, so it could be a Caravan for short rough strips, a rotary-wing aircraft, or a Global Express 604.

"The aircraft is really just a means of conveyance," said Culligan. "The basic structure, essentially the box the patient lies on, will be inside the aircraft. The equipment will come from the medical provider with an intensive care unit (ICU) flight physician and an ICU flight nurse to provide the medical support, which is the essential part. The medical crew drive the process."

The frustrations PAM face in Africa are constant as Culligan, who knows the region well after 20-years of aero-medical operations in East Africa, explained: "Africa is a huge continent, four-and-a-half times the size of America, and, unfortunately, some people think that Nigeria and Nairobi are the same place – so the size and vastness of Africa is something that doesn't get across.

"Firstly, there is the government trying to understand the urgency and not quite grasping it. So we have a commercial type of operation, like British Airways for example, which comes in at 10am – the government understands that. You have a commercial charter operation where a businessman is coming in and the government will understand it might take two or three days for clearances. But, for medevac, where people might die if we don't get there as quickly as possible, the government structure is set up in a way that they don't accept that."

"Our concept is to have a PAM-African solution of the air ambulance closer to the patient."
SEAN CULLIGAN

He added: "Africa has political conflicts, civil wars, poor infrastructure, strife, a lack of assets, there are so many things in Africa that are unique. So, to have a PAM-African aero-medical solution with various locations that provide air ambulances that can link together will offer a better service to everybody, and that's what we're trying to do."

Culligan pointed out that the European Aeromedical Institute, which is one the two organisations in the world that accredits air ambulance companies, sets an example.

"If everyone can reach that standard, then the client, the insurer the assistance companies, the hospital will know their patient is in good hands in that bed-to-bed service," he said.

By attending AfBAA, Culligan hopes attention will be drawn to the problems medevac companies face in the region.

"This forum gives an opportunity, not only for business and commercial aviation operators who understand this, to come together as a body and work with the governments. You have ministers or their representatives here, so if they can take that message back from the 100 or so delegates here and say 'we have a problem', then that is a great start."

Après l'ouverture du YU Lounge à l'île Maurice et aux Caraïbes, la société Veling a procédé à l'ouverture d'un nouvel hangar pour accueillir les avions d'affaires sur le sol mauricien. **Vincent Chappard** *a interrogé son fondateur et directeur général, Nirvan Veerasamy, sur ses multiples projets pour développer l'aviation d'affaires dans l'océan Indien et en Afrique.*

Veling fait pousser les ailes dans l'océan Indien

La cérémonie d'inauguration de cette nouvelle infrastructure aéroportuaire portant la signature de la société Veling s'est déroulée le 6 mai dernier en présence du Premier ministre mauricien ainsi que le ministre du Tourisme. Au coût de 3 millions de dollars, ce projet a été conçu techniquement avec l'avionneur français Dassault. La société mauricienne Veling, située à l'aéroport international SSR dispose ainsi d'une surface de 2000 m2 et a la capacité d'accueillir 4 Falcon 900 ou 2 jets Global Express. Elle offre aussi des facilités de « hangaring » et de maintenance.

L'arrivée d'avions privés à l'île Maurice a connu une croissance constante depuis plusieurs années. On dénombre aujourd'hui 200 à 300 jets d'affaires qui viennent chaque année sur l'île.

« Le nouvel hangar est conçu pour soutenir le secteur de l'aviation d'affaires et pour répondre efficacement aux besoins des propriétaires d'avions », affirme Nirvan Veerasamy. « Nous avons basé notre stratégie sur l'innovation et le service à la clientèle, ce qui place l'île Maurice en avance sur les autres aéroports disponibles dans la région."

Il s'agit en effet de donner à l'océan Indien, toute la pléiade de services qu'un terminal privé puisse offrir : un accueil VIP, un hangar et des prestations de FBO pour les avions d'affaires.

Selon Nirvan Veerasamy, les clients d'avions d'affaires ne viennent pas dans un pays s'ils ne peuvent pas abriter leurs avions. Ce projet du nouvel hangar faisait partie intégrante du projet initial du YU Lounge (voir encadré). « Nous avons pris la décision de réaliser en premier le terminal privé puis le hangar pour des raisons purement économique. »

Veling travaille en collaboration avec les avionneurs Dassault, Bombardier et Citation qui peuvent utiliser ce hangar comme un FBO pour les avions qui opèrent dans la région. La société ambitionne de capter de la maintenance des avions d'affaires à l'île Maurice et profiter de la situation géographique de l'île entre l'Afrique et le Moyen-Orient.

« Ces avionneurs ont la possibilité d'avoir une structure très loin de leurs bases et d'envoyer leurs mécaniciens pour effectuer un dépannage si jamais un de leurs avions était en panne dans la région », rappelle Nirvan Veerasamy.

Ce qui n'était qu'une vision à l'époque s'est effectivement produit lors de la première opération sur un avion dans ce nouvel hangar. Il s'agissait d'un Falcon 2000 venant d'Afrique du sud. L'avion avait un problème avec l'une de ses roues. Le propriétaire est arrivé à Maurice. Dassault a envoyé un mécanicien qui a effectué les réparations nécessaires pour que l'avion puisse repartir très vite.

Veling cherche désormais à avoir les agréments et les certifications (EASA 145, FAR 145 et PART 145) ou de faire venir des sociétés qui possèdent les agréments pour réaliser des opérations de maintenance.

Les avions d'affaires qui viennent à Maurice ou dans la région présentent un avantage pour un opérateur FBO. Ils n'opèrent pas comme à l'aéroport du Bourget ou de Farnborough, c'est-à-dire arriver le matin et repartir le soir. Dans la majorité des cas, ils restent une nuit voir plus. Cela donne la possibilité aux propriétaires ou aux

YU LOUNGE : UNE VÉRITABLE RÉUSSITE

Le YU Lounge est selon ses créateurs, un concept unique et novateur alliant aviation et hôtellerie. L'ADN du produit est axé sur un service optimum au client dans l'enceinte d'un aéroport. Le YU Lounge se charge pour ses clients de l'ensemble des formalités administratives (enregistrement, sécurité, bagages, immigration,…) en collaboration avec les autorités pendant qu'ils profitent de leur temps libre dans un salon privé. Le YU Lounge est non seulement ouvert aux avions privés mais également à l'ensemble des passagers des vols commerciaux. Les utilisateurs ne subissent jamais l'agitation de l'aérogare principale, ses longues files d'attente et ne connaissent jamais le stress. Après le succès du YU Lounge Maurice, le deuxième YU Lounge est opérationnel à Saint Kits (Caraïbes) proche de Saint Barth (l'île des milliardaires) depuis janvier 2014. Selon Nirvan Veerasamy, ce second YU Lounge est « un bel investissement et fonctionne très bien ». De quoi agrandir la famille…

The first dedicated business aviation FBO in Mauritius gives business aviation a real home on the island. Driving the project was Nirvan Veerasamy (pictured left), CEO of Veling.

utilisateurs d'avions d'affaires de faire du business et de profiter des plages et des hôtels.

Côté tarmac, cela permet d'avoir les avions plus longtemps pour réaliser des prestations comme le nettoyage intérieur et extérieur ou de réaliser des opérations de maintenance simples. Veling a d'ailleurs signé un contrat avec une société de handling à Maurice qui a déjà la capacité de faire des opérations de maintenance (C-Check and D-Check) sur des ATR72.

Nirvan Veerasamy ne compte pas s'arrêter en si bon chemin. Il cherche également des opportunités pour développer sa marque et implanter le YU Lounge en Asie, en Inde, en Europe et en Afrique. Il nous a confié que Veling décidera avant fin 2015 du lieu d'implantation du 3ème YU Lounge (en Afrique) et d'un quatrième YU Lounge. Il compte également mettre en place rapidement une société de leasing d'avions d'affaires ainsi que des opérations de transport de VIP en jet privé depuis Maurice. Véritable touche à tout, il étudie également la possibilité de baser un avion médicalisé à Maurice et ainsi doter la région de capacités de transporter des ressortissants ou des patients à Maurice, La Réunion ou en Afrique du sud. ■

SUMMARY

New business aviation hangar in Mauritius

After opening the YU Lounge in Mauritius and the Caribbean, Veling opened a new hangar to accommodate business jets on Mauritian soil. **Vincent Chappard** *interviewed the company's founder and CEO, Nirvan Veerasamy, about this and other projects to develop business aviation in the Indian Ocean and Africa.*

The inauguration of the new $3 million hangar took place in the presence of the Mauritian prime minister and the minister of tourism. The design was undertaken with the assistance of French aircraft manufacturer Dassault.

The 2,000sqm hangar is located at SSR International Airport and is big enough to accommodate four Falcon 900 or two Bombardier Global Express business jets. Both 'hangaring' and maintenance are offered.

Around 200-300 business jets now visit the island every year, said Veerasamy, who added: "The new hangar is designed to support the business aviation sector and to effectively meet the needs of aircraft owners."

Veling is working with aircraft manufacturers Dassault, Bombardier and Cessna and aims to capture the maintenance of business aircraft in Mauritius. It has also signed a contract with a handling company in Mauritius, which already has the ability to do maintenance operations (C and D-check) on ATR72 turboprops.

Veerasamy is looking to develop the Veling brand and implement the YU Lounge in Asia, India, Europe and Africa. He said the company would decide before the end of 2015 the location of the third lounge (in Africa) and the fourth.

It also intends to settle a business aircraft leasing company and VIP transport operations by private jet from Mauritius and is also studying the possibility of basing an air ambulance there.

After the success of YU Lounge Mauritius, the second such facility has been operational in St Kits (Caribbean) since January 2014.

Switzerland-based ExecuJet has come a long way since it started out in South Africa in the 90s. Yet its heart is still in Africa, as Ettori Poggi told **Ian Sheppard**.

ExecuJet fixed as a new force

When news broke unexpectedly last year that ExecuJet would be acquired by Luxaviation-CMI Group it put the Swiss company at the centre of the new wave of consolidation many had said was well overdue in business aviation.

With a chain of fixed-base operators (FBOs) – essentially VIP terminals with their own hangars for corporate and private aircraft – the company had become a force to be reckoned with in its own right.

Meanwhile, Luxaviation had already acquired Abelag of Germany and London Executive Aviation, to create one of the largest concerns of its kind in the world.

But, given all this excitement, what plans does ExecuJet, which has retained its brand and identity, have in store for Africa?

As Ettore Poggi, vice president Africa and director maintenance, ExecuJet Group, said, it has already established bases other than its main African facility, which is situated at Lanseria Airport, near Johannesburg.

The Cape Town facility, which I visited in February, opened in 2009 and Lagos, Nigeria opened in 2012.

But what of maintenance, given the lack of support infrastructure for business aircraft across Africa?

In this respect, ExecuJet represents a shining light of hope. "There are many maintenance facilities in Africa but few specialise in large business jets," said Poggi. "That is, being able to service not only turboprops, but long-range large-cabin business jets from overseas.

"I can say proudly we are one of the few, if not the only, discounting the likes of Ethiopian Airlines. It's really just been us at Lanseria for the past 20 years, and more recently we've opened up in Cape Town and have a joint venture in Nigeria, with Quits Aviation."

He said that the ExecuJet facilities were busy "because we represent most of the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) – Bombardier, Dassault, Gulfstream – and we are already attracting aircraft from outside the region, from far afield as Europe, and find [Africa-based] aircraft come here when they used to prefer to go to Europe. And in Cape Town, specifically, we are also focusing on, for example, Dash 8s and CRJs for the airlines too."

He continued by noting that lots of the OEMs focus on West Africa "thinking that's going to be where the boom is".

So with three FBOs, what other opportunities exist in Africa, given that there is demand? "If I were to accept and take forward every offer I could probably have one every 20km," joked Poggi. "But it's a big investment. You also need a local partner as you need local knowledge."

'There are many maintenance facilities in Africa but few specialise in large business jets... I can say proudly we are one of the few.'
ETTORE POGGI

This is the approach ExecuJet has taken in Nigeria – and Poggi admits that if anywhere is on its radar as the next best place, it is Angola, with the proviso that, "I don't think the demand is there quite yet."

He also cautioned: "If we open up another in close proximity it might detract from what we're doing already. And I'd be hesitant to say that we could open up an FBO as big as Lanseria and get a profit within two years."

While the maintenance activities support the FBO operations, there are also opportunities for other work, said Poggi. "We've just finished an upgrade of a King Air to full glass cockpit, Garmin 1000, on time – and the customer is happy. We may see more of that kind of upgrades while the currency [South African Rand] is still weak. And the indications are that it's not going to improve."

There is a similar situation in Nigeria, where in recent months the Naira currency has gone up from 150 making one $US so that it is now 200.

"That has cost implications – spares and labour in particular," said Poggi. So in the MRO field ExecuJet is "spreading our net to attract more customers" while also developing the local skills base in Nigeria, as it has in South Africa. "Until then we have to pay in US dollars."

Ella Nethersole, Ian Sheppard and Alan Peaford *were in Casablanca for the first MEBAA Show Morocco. Pictures by* **Ian Billinghurst**.

MOROCCAN ROLE

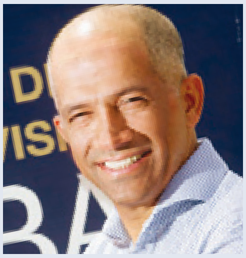
More than 2000 visitors braved the heat of Casablanca to give backing to the first exclusive business aviation show of its kind in the North African region.

The MEBAA Morocco event comes at a time when Morocco is reviewing its civil aviation activities and has committed to a recognition of the value of the business aviation sector.

The two-day event, run by the Middle East and North Africa Business Aviation Association (MEBAA) in conjunction with F&E Aerospace, the organisers of the Dubai Airshow, consisted of a series of tents along a taxiway and apron at the Mohammed V Airport, Casablanca.

Welcoming visitors from across the region, Morocco's Transport minister, Aziz Rebbah, said: "We recognise the value that business aviation brings to a national economy and understand why developing the infrastructure and the support services is so vital for its continued growth.

"Already, Morocco represents about 50% of the business jet activity in North Africa. Our geographic position linking Europe with Africa is well known, but also our historic and cultural links with the Arab world has made us an attractive base for many expanding Middle Eastern businesses.



Ali Alnaqbi: Show will be a biennial event.

"The development of infrastructure is one of the key levers for higher growth and economic development in Morocco. In fact, all the commercial and touristic activities of Morocco will benefit from improved transport, compliant with the best international standards."

Rebbah's deputy, Mohamed Najib Boulif, formally opened the show and visited the long row of exhibitors featuring charter brokers, maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) and fixed-base operation (FBO) providers, operators and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs).

MEBAA's founding chairman, Ali Alnaqbi, said: "We were pleased with the response and support that MEBAA Show Morocco has received from both exhibitors and visitors. The show has exceeded our expectations."

After discussions with the Moroccan Government, Alnaqbi said the MEBAA Show Morocco would become a biennial event with the next edition in 2017.

"The African business aviation market has been resilient through the global financial crisis and new aircraft sales fared better than in developed markets such as Europe and North America," Alnaqbi said. "Africa's business jet fleet has more than doubled in the last 10 years."

JP Jets on the hunt for a partner

Nader Manna, general manager of Jordan based-JP Jets Group, said the company attended MEBAA as it believes Casablanca is possibly the best place to establish in North Africa, after having created two world-class FBO facilities in Amman and Aqaba.

The company, which specialises in handling private/corporate jets, has ambitions to expand and is also offering its expertise to others wishing to establish FBOs and VIP lounges. But its main goal at the show was to find a possible local partner.

"We're here to discover the North African market and see opportunities to open a branch in Morocco, especially Casablanca," said Manna. "People from the Gulf have switched from other destinations to Morocco, seeing it as safer than the likes of Libya."

Manna added that the company see Mohammed V Airport as the company's first choice for an FBO, as it has "all the infrastructure" and is committed to business aviation.

Flying the flag for Morocco

Air Ocean Maroc is the only Moroccan air charter company specialising in business aviation, medical evacuation and cargo, in the country.

The company started its operations in 2014, and already covers much of Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

"While we charter aircraft, our main business is medical air transport (medevac)," said Mohammed El Masaoudi, CEO. "We provide medical equipment inside the aircraft and we work in collaboration with doctors and insurance companies."

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The fleet includes a Cessna Citation VI, Cessna 404 Titan, and Beechcraft King Air 200.

"We cover a lot of Africa and recently we added a Citation 650 to our fleet, which allows us to fly directly from the centre of Africa back to Morocco," said Masaoudi.

"This is extremely important as we need to get patients back to the country and straight to hospital as quickly as possible.

"We hope to add another long-range aircraft next year to our portfolio to cover a direct service to the Middle East and East Africa."

Based in Rabat, but with its maintenance of aircraft at Ben Slimane Airport, the company also provides cargo solutions, which are not restricted to a fixed flight schedule and can transport goods throughout Morocco.

Air Ocean Maroc CEO Mohammed El Masaoudi.

El Masaoudi said that the company was also at MEBAA to look for potential customers to work in collaboration with maintenance and training companies, as well as another charter company: "Morocco is increasing in business aviation, especially as the tourist industry is increasing – so we want to stay at the top of our game."

Traditional dancers accompanied the opening of the first MEBAA Morocco show.

Chiara Dorigoti, of Prime Aviation Services.

Why North Africa is a prime target

Prime Aviation Services prides itself on being the first Italian fixed-base operation (FBO) for general aviation in Italy. It was at MEBAA to attract what it says is "the growing North African market".

"We offer the most complete set of ground-handling and concierge services at Milano Linate Prime," said Chiara Dorigotti, general manager. "We have approximately 24,000 movements per annum in Milan, with eight hangars in a 65,000sqm apron. We have a very strong infrastructure and have just upgraded and refurbished the new terminal in Milan."

The company also operates a refuelling service at its fuel farm at Milan Linate Prime and recently opened a catering company there, Prime Gusto, offering top quality handcrafted Italian and international cuisine.

With Milan being one of Europe's busiest business aviation terminals, Dorigotti said the company recognises that Morocco is the business aviation hub of North Africa: "African aviation is now very strong with increasing traffic, so it makes sense to present here at MEBAA."

Morocco business aviation hub on the drawing board

Morocco's Office National Des Aéroports (ONDA) and Director General D'Aviation Civile (DGAC) are working jointly on plans to develop Ben Slimane Airport into the country's main dedicated business aviation hub.

This will include a new fixed-base operation (FBO), while an invitation has also been issued for FBOs at six of the country's main airports.

Ben Slimane is ideally located between the country's main economic centres of Casablanca and Rabat, and is very close to the fast-growing Mohammedia port city (the centre of the Moroccan oil industry). It has a single runway (14/32, 3,074m long) and has already started to establish itself as a convenient destination for private aviation, with Stars Aviation Services operating the existing VIP lounge.

Zine Youssef, head of DGAC's operations department, said that six fixed-wing operators had already signed up for the new facility – Anfajet, Alfa Air, Mt Fly, Dalia Air, Air Ocean Maroc (AOM) and ASA. In addition, Heliconia will be the first helicopter operator there.

The development will include a new dedicated FBO but the timing of the opening of the facility, which will be an existing converted building, has not yet been revealed. Youssef said that the opening depended on commitments from operators.

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With the other six airports targeted for business aviation development, ONDA has announced an invitation to tender for a contract to develop FBOs at Casablanca, Marrakech, Agadir, Tangier, Rabat-Salé and Fès. It said that this would "guarantee the development of this activity".

ONDA said that it had already "developed some exclusive services dedicated to regular users of business flying" at both Casablanca Mohammed V Airport and Marrakech Menara Airport.

At Casablanca and Marrakech, ONDA said it offered "a business aviation package which included personalised welcome and assistance services, the use of its lounges, the simplification of the administrative procedures as well as the flight plan preparation in the best conditions… intended for corporate or private passengers." ONDA offers a dedicated "professional team" for "personalised support".

One of the companies at the show, already making inroads into the Moroccan markets, was Swissport Executive Aviation.

It received its licence to provide ground-handling and executive aviation services two-and-a-half years ago, but is already operating in nine airports in the country.

With Casablanca and Marrakech being Swissport's busiest Moroccan airports, it also serves Rabat, Agadir, Fes, Oujda, Nadar, Tangier and Essaoira. Overall, Morocco has more than 8,000 business aviation flights a year, which includes diplomatic flights and helicopters.

African airlines...

«Les compagnies africaines: Le point de vue des experts » – Page 76

Victoria Moores *approached seven leading airline consultants on behalf of* African Aerospace *and asked them what their main piece of advice would be for African airline CEOs. The results were fascinating.*

While the consultants' tips work well in isolation, some key themes kept cropping up. African airlines need to maximise their revenues to spread their costs, which will in turn bring down ticket prices, stimulate the market, boost the economy and generate more profit.

However, this simple equation is tricky to implement. To a degree, it requires market freedoms, such as liberalisation, which are still in their infancy, so African carriers have to seek strategic partnerships to enter new markets and achieve economies of scale. This was identified by several of the experts as a priority.

To properly tap market potential, you need a realistic strategic plan, with clear milestones, regular reviews and concrete delivery. This long-term vision has to be shared with stakeholders and employees, with delegated responsibility for implementation. Everyone within the airline needs to be motivated and working towards the same goal.

African airlines can also learn from the low-cost model. These airlines have mastered the art of yield management, encouraging passengers to book early to get cheap fares, or expect a higher ticket cost closer to departure. They also maximise their fleet utilisation, using reliable new aircraft, and have a relentless focus on cost control across every area of their operation.

Most importantly, airlines need to keep their promises. They need to be safe, reliable and deliver the product that they advertise, in line with passenger expectations.

There must also be a clear divide between ownership and management. An airline must be allowed to run as a business, without government interference. However, governments have a vital role to play, by pushing ahead with liberalisation so airlines can strengthen their networks, spread their overheads and, ultimately, boost their national economies.

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Regulators also need to create an ecosystem for their airline, including stringent safety oversight, reliable infrastructure and market-based costs, following the integrated approach of the Gulf states. Ethiopian Airlines proves this can be done and is frequently cited as a role model for governance, strategic planning, partnerships, scale and profitability.

But the warning is stark. African airlines must move quickly and decisively to solidify their competitive positions, or risk draining their state treasuries and being forced out the market by non-African rivals.

Focus on yield to stay ahead of the field

Rob Watts, Aerotask VP airline financial consulting:
"I think there needs to be a greater focus on yield management. For example, FastJet has taken routes from two frequencies a week to two frequencies a day by managing yields. That is something Africa really needs to improve on and invest resources in.

"When we do research for business plans, we take samples of yields across different days, times and booking curves. Sometimes, if you book for a flight tomorrow it's $400, and when you book a month in advance it's still $400. There's no variation; they don't capture that last-minute booker properly.

"It's also a cultural thing, because people in Africa still expect to show up at the counter and pay the price they saw two weeks ago.

"In the longer term, airlines need to sit down with their civil aviation authorities and get them to work with the government to liberalise, because that's going to improve everything. It will give airlines access to new routes, which will lower their overheads, create healthy competition and bring down yields."

JBAs KEY TO GAINING AN ADVANTAGE

Ogan Kose, Accenture global head of trading, investments and commercial optimisation strategy:
"My leading piece of advice for companies in the African aviation sector would be to look into how to leverage the power of joint business arrangements (JBAs) and other partnering structures to gain strategic advantage.

"With aviation demand growth still strong in Africa, the challenge is how to position yourself to expand into new markets. This requires access to capital, to local experience and supply chains, to long-haul hubs and to attractive frequent flyer programmes. Local companies bring many of these to the table and airlines need to understand how a JBA partner can complement their offering.

"We have worked with a number of companies to look at their strategic gaps, to identify and introduce partners, to structure the JBA negotiation mechanisms and to drive the JBA through to completed agreement."

the experts' view

PRIORITISE TO MEET THE CHALLENGE

Mathewos Gobena, CEO 3Green:
"African airlines face unique challenges in the short- to medium-term, which require unique solutions. These include the growth of domestic and regional competition, as well as their markets being increasingly targeted by major international airlines. Therefore, they need to develop a project plan, comprehensive fleet planning, customer services, marketing and sales strategies.

"Changing technologies also threaten to leave many African airlines behind, unless they can find financially viable ways of introducing and using the latest global distribution systems (GDS), inventory and revenue management software. Senior management need to be qualified to handle all challenges and there needs to be continuous training.

"All processes must be streamlined, quality management systems need to be introduced and some services outsourced to qualified service providers.

"Aviation is a heavily-regulated business, with regional and international bodies continuously updating and introducing new requirements, which must be followed. Safety should be the utmost priority. Meeting these objectives in a reasonable amount of time is a big challenge."

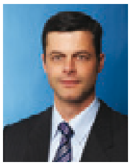
COLLABORATE TO FORM A FRIENDLY FRAMEWORK

John Strickland, JLS Consulting director:
"I'd recommend, in the interests of the whole African industry, that more attempts are made at collaboration to achieve a more efficient and commercially-friendly regulatory framework.

"Africa has a number of examples of well-run businesses and airlines. Ethiopian Airlines and Kenya Airways should be seen as role models of how to run a world-class airline, which can be emulated by others.

"Equally, the disciplines brought by low-cost carriers to business management are instructive in guiding improvements."

Move now in order to compete



Jonathan Sullivan, Seabury Consulting managing director, head of Europe and Middle East consulting:
"African carriers' capacity planning, capital investment decisions and go-to-market plans are being affected by under-appreciated competitive factors that should fundamentally change the calculus of strategic planning.

"African carriers should move quickly and decisively to solidify their competitive positions.

"With all of the talk about how the European and North American airlines are adversely affected by the growth of the large Middle Eastern airlines, the impact on Africa has been lost. The growth in the Middle East will deliver a negative impact on African airlines: competition in Africa is increasing faster than economic growth. The growth in the Middle East fundamentally reshapes the market and resets prices for all long-haul flows out of Africa, except those from North Africa to the Americas.

"This is the new reality and African carriers will need to adapt their capacity plans, networks, partnership strategy, pricing and cost structures to compete effectively and profitably – or risk dependence on the state's treasury."

Business must come before government

Zemedeneh Negatu, Ernst & Young managing partner (Ethiopia):
"Recently Ethiopian Airlines posted a $175 million profit; that's more than the entire African industry combined. What is happening to our airlines in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa?

"My first and foremost recommendation to anyone wanting to own and operate an airline is that it has to be run as a business – not as a non-government organisation, not as a charity. There can be an element of public service but an airline is not a private jet for senior decision-makers, which is what used to happen in Africa. They should learn from Ethiopia, where the prime minister and government officials pay commercial rates to use Ethiopian Airlines' aircraft.

"Even though the government owns 100% of the airline, it doesn't interfere with its business. Ethiopian Airlines is a strategic tool, which helps the Ethiopian economy. For example, its cargo exports support the country's flower industry.

"Other, wealthier countries need to learn from that model. There is nothing wrong with a government owning an airline – Ethiopian Airlines and Emirates have shown the world that it can be done – it just needs to be run like a business. Ownership must not be confused with operational effectiveness.

"But the airline alone is not enough. You need to look at it as an integrated system. I always tell project promoters that they need to address infrastructure issues. An ecosystem needs to be created to support successful business. We see high charges and excessive jet fuel prices, even in oil-producing countries.

"Also, a standalone airline in Africa cannot survive. This is a capital intensive, and human capital intensive, business. That can't happen overnight. You need to bring in a strategic partner – to collaborate or perish – because it's too easy to bleed to death."

SOMMAIRE

Compagnies africaines: Le point de vue des experts

Victoria Moores *a interrogé sept principaux consultants de l'aérien sur les conseils qu'ils prodigueraient aux directeurs des compagnies aériennes africaines. Les résultats sont saisissants.*

Fait saillant : de nombreuses thématiques sont récurrentes. Les compagnies aériennes africaines doivent accroître leurs revenus afin de répartir leurs coûts, ce qui baissera les prix et stimulera le marché et l'économie.

Cette équation simple est toutefois sensible à appliquer.

Elle repose sur la libéralisation du marché qui n'est qu'à ses balbutiements et les transporteurs africains doivent trouver des partenariats stratégiques pour pénétrer de nouveaux marchés et réaliser des économies d'échelle.

Pour cela, il faut un plan stratégique pragmatique avec des repères précis, des études régulières et un rendement concret. Les décideurs et les employés doivent partager cette vision à long terme.

Les compagnies aériennes africaines peuvent également apprendre du modèle low-cost surtout concernant l'art de la gestion. Elles doivent impérativement tenir leurs promesses.

C'est aussi important d'avoir une démarcation claire entre l'actionnariat et la gestion. Une compagnie doit opérer sans l'ingérence du gouvernement, qui a toutefois un rôle essentiel à jouer comme régulateur et pour créer un écosystème favorable.

Les compagnies aériennes africaines doivent donc agir rapidement pour augmenter leur compétitivité.

Ethiopian Airlines est la preuve que c'est possible avec un plan solide et une bonne gouvernance.

Quelques conseils de nos consultants :

■ MATHEWOS GOBENA (3GREEN)
- **Elaborez un plan cohérent.**
- **Introduisez des nouvelles technologies.**

■ OGAN KOSE (ACCENTURE)
- **Utilisez les JBAs et d'autres structures de partenariat comme levier.**

■ ROB WATTS (AEROTASK)
- **Concentrez-vous sur le « yield management ».**
- **Discutez avec les autorités de l'aviation civile pour pousser les gouvernements vers la libéralisation.**

■ ZEMEDENEH NEGATU (ERNST & YOUNG)
- **Inspirez-vous d'Ethiopian Airlines.**
- **Gérez votre compagnie comme une entreprise et non pas comme une ONG ou un organisme de bienfaisance.**
- **Voyez votre compagnie comme un système intégré.**

■ JOHN STRICKLAND (JLS CONSULTING) :
- **Ethiopian Airlines et Kenya Airways sont des modèles.**
- **Travaillez sur un encadrement de réglementation efficace.**

■ BRUNO BOUCHER (LUFTHANSA CONSULTING)
- **Elaborez une stratégie à long terme.**
- **Clarifiez les structures de gouvernance et consolidez votre équipe.**

■ JONATHAN SULLIVAN (SEABURY CONSULTING)
- **Préparez-vous à faire face aux facteurs concurrentiels.**
- **Adaptez-vous à la nouvelle donne car la concurrence en Afrique augmente plus vite que la croissance économique.**

GOOD STRATEGY, GOVERNANCE, AND A STRONG TEAM

Bruno Boucher, Lufthansa Consulting associate partner:
"The most important thing is to have a long-term strategy for up to 20 years, with milestones at one, two, five and 10 years. That way, you can show the plan to your stakeholders. For example, maybe you're 100% government-owned, but in 20 years you want to be fully privatised, flying all over the place and have good partnerships with other local operators.

"Secondly, you need to clarify the governance structures between the shareholders, the supervisory board and the executives. It needs to be clear before you start.

"Thirdly, you need a strong execution team that will also explore cooperation potential and question the approach on a regular basis. They are there to execute, not to think and dream.

"You are the CEO; you are there to establish where you're going to be in five years or more, and have the right team to push that. Then you've got to put safety and quality of delivery first, develop your own culture and not hesitate to bring in experts to help. You need all those dimensions – a plan, the right governance and an execution team – and full interaction with your stakeholders, your government, your civil aviation authority (CAA), etc.

"You need to say 'if you want this airline to succeed, to be here in 20 years, then this is the plan I need to get under way. How can you help me? I need financing; I need tax breaks, whatever'. You need to show them something. You can't just say I'm here, I'm trying and I want this. You need to say 'I have a plan and this is important'.

"Always review your plan. Normally it's an exercise that you do every year; has anything changed? Have any new opportunities come up that could influence the plan?

"A lot of airlines don't have a plan, their plan isn't clear, or it isn't shared with stakeholders. "If you're lucky, maybe you will progress faster than planned. If you're not, maybe it will take longer, but at least you'll follow a certain line and things won't come as a surprise tomorrow and the day after. Ethiopian had 12 aircraft and look where it is today; that wasn't a surprise."

When Daallo Airlines called in Dubai-based consultancy Aerotask for a bit of business advice, neither side realised the job would culminate in the merger of the airline with local rival Jubba Airways fewer than six months later. **Victoria Moores** *reports.*

ANATOMY OF A MERGER

The merger between Daallo Airlines and rival Jubba Airways came as a bit of a surprise to Rob Watts, vice president airline financial consulting at Aerotask.

"We were originally engaged by Daallo in September 2014 with what just started off as business planning," explained Watts.

"However, Daallo started talking to Jubba and they came to an arrangement. Then it transformed into 'how do we do this merger'?"

The job became more complicated, the fee remained the same, and by February 2015 the two privately-owned scheduled airlines were merged.

The new arrangement made perfect sense, according to Daallo Airlines CEO Mohamed Ibrahim Yassin.

"We had a lot of experience of doing the same thing again and again, but doing it the wrong way," he said. "It was high time for us to put our forces together. We were operating to Dubai three times a week from Somalia and Djibouti and they [Jubba] were doing exactly the same thing. Each aircraft was half empty, so it became a matter of common sense and maturity that we had to transcend that losing game and go into consolidation."

> **"We had a lot of experience of doing the same thing again and again, but doing it the wrong way."**
> MOHAMED IBRAHIM YASSIN

Technically Daallo and Jubba were long-term rivals, sharing the same model and niche, operating domestic flights within Somalia, to Dubai, Djibouti and Kenya. However, in practice relations were good between the two airlines.

"Daallo and Jubba were always good acquaintances; it wasn't a competitive relationship, so they just decided to work together. They already had the basic terms. It was very relaxed," said Watts.

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Both carriers rely heavily on wet- or damp-leased aircraft for fleet flexibility, using anchor aircraft – a BAe 146 and Airbus A321 for Daallo, and Boeing 737s for Jubba – as a hook for their air operator's certificates (AOCs).

Their networks are alike but, crucially, Daallo has a Djibouti AOC, while Jubba has a Kenyan one. "They have two AOCs, in two countries, giving them access to different sets of route rights which, for the time being, are not being used too heavily," Watts said.

But the two airlines were coming under increasing external pressure, with carriers like Flydubai launching operations to Daallo and Jubba's Mogadishu hub. "It was quite clear this was what they had to do," Watts said. "Their primary market from Dubai to Somalia was getting really diluted by these carriers, so they needed to shift their focus from Dubai to intra-Somalia. Nobody else can do the domestic feed around Somalia and connect it to Dubai like they do, so they needed to work together."

Aerotask was hired by each of the airlines to advise on the deal, evaluate their respective operations and prepare a business plan for the carriers post-merger. The modelling was done at consolidated entity level – viewing the two airlines as one – and the main focus for the work was capacity management.

"We didn't reinvent the wheel," said Watts. "They were operating the same routes, on the same days, within an hour of each other, so we looked at optimising the network and then, for the future, moving to similar aircraft so they can have type synergies. Individually their niche was the same and together it remains the same, domestic Somalia. Nobody else is willing to enter that market because of the associated risks, so their combined niche is connecting the wider African market to domestic Somalia."

In terms of structure, Aerotask recommended

Marian Pistik of consultants Aerotask at the Aviation Africa event in Dubai in May.

that Daallo and Jubba should become subsidiaries of a new holding company, mirroring the structure used by British Airways (BA) and Iberia parent International Consolidated Airlines Group (IAG). "That way, the holding company can hold as many airlines as it likes, as long as it maintains 49% ownership and doesn't have effective control," said Watts.

Daallo and Jubba took this advice. They have maintained their own AOCs and created the Africa Aero Alliance, which has taken stakes in both carriers.

"The structure is set up so that shareholders can join from other airlines. Everyone would become a shareholder in the holding company and the holding company would hold 49% of the other companies. The original shareholders would continue to own 51% [of their own carrier], so they maintain the nationality of the airlines," explained Watts.

Effectively Africa Aero Alliance is aiming to be like the former Air Afrique, but without the political intervention. This model is also being pursued by low-cost carrier FastJet and South African start-up Skywise. However Daallo and Jubba are planning to offer a traditional network airline product.

"The goal is for this thing to be cross-Africa, similar to what FastJet is trying to do, with multiple AOCs. That is the only way to expand in Africa. African airlines can only work together through commercial consolidation, otherwise they need to set up multiple AOCs and that is a really inefficient way to grow. That's what the situation dictates right now within the current legal framework," said Watts.

Yassin highlighted the situation in Djibouti as an example of the need for consolidation. "Over the last six or seven years there have been 10 start-up carriers and each one of them flew for only one year. It's the same story across Africa. What we need is consolidation."

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While the physical merger has proceeded rapidly, Daallo and Jubba are still adapting to their newly combined form, figuring out their commercial, network and leadership structures. "The merger itself is not easy. We are putting two company cultures together, that's quite a difficult task so you need preparedness, vision and diligence to make it a success," said Yassin.

Then there is the fleet. Aerotask recommended that Daallo should phase out its BAe146 at its next heavy maintenance interval and advised Jubba to make some minor aircraft-related changes to its AOC set-up.

In the short term, Daallo and Jubba does not want to add aircraft – its focus is on better management of its existing capacity – so it will consolidate its existing fleet of five wet-leased narrow-bodies (two 737-200s, a 737-300, a 737-400 and an A321-100), plus the BAe146 and two Antonov AN 24 turboprops.

It is also looking at modernising and unifying its fleet. This is likely to see it shift from wet- to dry-leases and then, ultimately, aircraft ownership. "The carrier wants to go into aircraft ownership, basically to give it more control of its own aircraft. The types it has are adequate for the short term, but then it will look at a fleet renewal and type synergies," said Watts.

Ultimately, Daallo and Jubba will most likely eye a couple of 50- to 70-seat single-class turboprops, creating a potential business opportunity for Bombardier and ATR, or a used aircraft seller. They are also looking to take around three dual-class narrow-bodies. In the longer term, the partners may also consider resuming flights to Europe.

However, for the time being they have their hands full. "The merger is a lot of work. I think it will take them a couple of years to sort out their new culture, processes and systems. This is too much work to do all at once. The legalities may have been finalised, but the work of getting everyone on the same page is a long process," said Watts. ■

Having made impressive strides with its turnaround plan, Air Namibia is itching to get back into growth mode before a new breed of low-cost competitors swoops on the country. **Martin Rivers** *reports.*

THE ROCKY ROAD TO SURVIVAL

We know the low-cost carriers will come. It's just a matter of when. So said Rene Gsponer, Air Namibia's outgoing managing director, in a stone-faced interview at the International Air Transport Association (IATA) AGM in Miami.

"But we are ready for them – much more than we were two years ago," he added.

A Swiss national, Gsponer landed the job of chief operating officer and accountable manager at Air Namibia in October 2013, following a lengthy stint as one of IATA's senior consultants.

His appointment came in the midst of a painful restructuring period at the Namibian carrier, whose government owner was rapidly losing patience with the parastatal for its heavy financial losses. After commissioning IATA to develop an urgent turnaround strategy, the airline's board was so impressed by Gsponer that it put him in charge of executing what had now become a do-or-die plan.

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It took just one year for the consultant-turned-manager's vision to bear fruit, with Air Namibia announcing four consecutive months of profit in November 2014 for the first time in its history.

Although the flag-carrier still loses money outside of its peak season, Gsponer's record speaks for itself. Whereas the losses for 2012/13 and 2013/14 both exceeded the government's target of N$600 million ($44 million), the available data for 2014/15 points to an expected halving of that figure.

"It's the first time we will beat the approved loss," the airline boss, who steps down in November, confirmed. "The verified results to the end of [calendar year] 2014 show that we only lost N$199 million ($14.6m)."

Withdrawing Air Namibia's Accra, Ghana route has helped stem the bleeding, but Gsponer said most of the improvements came on the revenue side. Without dramatically altering its network, the airline has lifted load factors to 77%; raised ticket prices by an average of N$1,000 ($73.0); and steadily increased utilisation of the ten-strong fleet.

"In October 2014 we had a monthly revenue of N$205 million," he beamed. "A year ago this would have been a dream. Nobody said we could break N$200 million – but in 2014 we actually broke it twice."

The strong performance was fuelled in large part by modernisation of Air Namibia's sales strategies and the introduction of new revenue management systems – low-hanging fruit that Gsponer's predecessor, Theo Namases, announced in 2013.

But, while these are welcome steps, they fall well short of the comprehensive strategic overhaul that incoming boss Mandi Samson must now implement.

Samson's challenge will only get tougher when Flyafrica Namibia gets back on its feet.

With a population of just two million and a remote location in southern Africa, Namibia would be a tricky base of operations for any airline. Samson's challenge will only get tougher when Flyafrica Namibia, a joint venture between local charter company Bay Air and Mauritius-based Flyafrica Ltd, gets back on its feet.

Air Namibia twice blocked the start-up from launching in 2015 by filing complaints with national regulators. When Flyafrica eventually took to the skies on September 2, the flag-carrier redoubled its efforts and convinced the High Court to ground its competitor just two days into operations.

Gsponer pulled no punches when discussing his opposition to Flyafrica. He believes that the company lacks the necessary operating licences in

Namibia, and that its ownership structure is effectively a 'front' for foreign investors.

"For this carrier to be approved in Namibia, it needs to pass [conditions laid down by] the transport commission," Gsponer said. "Once it does that, then it needs to pass the civil aviation authority [regulations]. They're the two steps it needs to take. All we're saying is it has to follow the same regulations as any other carrier.

"We are not afraid [of competition], but at the moment it is not passing those requirements."

The outgoing boss admitted that "both hurdles can be overcome", but insisted the overheads that accompany these rules and regulations will lift Flyafrica's cost-base, in turn narrowing its pricing advantage. Proving compliance is also "a timely process", and Air Namibia fully intends to exploit the temporary reprieve afforded by its High Court victory.

"If we get more time [before Flyafrica launches] it's good, because we can lift our market share," Gsponer said, referring to the airline's pre-existing 62% slice of the pie. "Then when somebody new comes, they can get their own market share. It's all about market share at the moment – Namibia is not a big market.

"When you have only two million people, you have to fight for the load factor we have. And that's what we're doing."

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The government has already given its blessing for Air Namibia to grow by 10% a year under the existing turnaround plan, which was initiated in 2012. But, with IATA now estimating that the Namibian market would double in size if open skies were introduced, Gsponer believes those plans need to be accelerated.

"We will first focus on the domestic market," he affirmed. "Namibia's a very large country. We have a lot of people driving for too many hours, with a high risk of young people being killed on the road. If we can tap into a market where the tickets are affordable, then people will not go on 10-hour road trips."

Beefing up the main domestic trunk route from capital city Windhoek to Ondangwa in the north is one priority. The route is served up to three times daily from Windhoek's city-centre Eros Airport, and Gsponer wants frequencies to double by 2020. The secondary airport also handles four-times weekly flights to Rundu and Katima Mulilo in the north.

Elsewhere, however, efforts to strengthen the hub proposition at Windhoek's main gateway, Hosea Kutako International Airport, will need more than internal traffic growth. Just three domestic points are served from the hub: Walvis Bay on the western coast is operated daily, while Luderitz and Oranjemund in the south are served four-times weekly.

Mindful of this small home market, Gsponer had begun looking to secondary cities outside of Namibia's borders.

"Within an hour of

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northern Namibia there are three million Angolans," he noted. "They don't want to go back to [Angola capital] Luanda when they are going south – be it Windhoek or Johannesburg or Cape Town."

There is also potential for Walvis Bay to function as an airfreight hub, complementing the new port project under way in the coastal city. "Once the port is developed, most of the cargo will go by road or railway, but there will be some urgent freight," he predicted. "In the years to come, Walvis Bay has the opportunity to become a cargo base, where we fly to anywhere in Africa and even to Europe."

The first step is commissioning an instrument landing system (ILS) at the airport, which suffers from adverse meteorological conditions.

More immediate expansion of the domestic and regional network will be facilitated by the arrival of two 50-seater aircraft – almost certainly Embraer ERJ-145s. They will join the existing fleet of two Airbus A330 wide-bodies, four A319 narrow-bodies, and four 37-seater ERJ-135s.

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Selecting the ERJ-145 – a stretched version of the ERJ-135 – is a no-brainer for Air Namibia because of the maintenance and training synergies that come with deploying an all-Embraer regional fleet.

"Simplicity is our success," the outgoing chief stressed. "We are a small airline. We cannot have various aircraft types."

The ERJ-145 is also widely available at "attractive" prices, prompting the board to include the purchase of two units in its budget for the current financial year. Asked how the new aircraft will be deployed, Gsponer said up-gauging existing services and boosting frequencies should take precedence over route launches: "On some routes, [such as] Eros to Ondangwa, we already have a lot of spill. We are leaving passengers behind with the 37-seaters. Also from Walvis Bay to South Africa we expect very soon that we will need a 50-seater."

Further acquisitions are not on the agenda for now. Air Namibia's fleet is one of the youngest in Africa, with an average aircraft age of just eight years. Operational growth can be achieved simply by lifting the utilisation rates of the Airbuses, which Gsponer admits are too low.

Nonetheless, even without capital-intensive plans for fleet expansion, incoming boss Samson will still need to secure government approval before changing the roadmap.

"It's our job as aviation experts to convince the board to look again at the plan," Gsponer said, adding that "good signals" have already been aired by ministers in the new government of president Hage Geingob. "They recognise that what was a good plan in 2012 might no longer be a good plan."

One thing not under review is the all-important Frankfurt route – Air Namibia's sole intercontinental service and a throwback to its history as a German colony. The 10hr 20min flight is operated six or seven times weekly with the A330s.

On an annual basis the route continues to be loss-making, but Gsponer was quick to talk up its indirect benefits. Today about 70% of the airline's passengers are European tourists, many of whom fly over Frankfurt with interline tickets from Lufthansa. Without these long-haul visitors, Air Namibia's estimated contribution of $100 million to national gross domestic product (GDP) plus 10,000 tourism-related jobs would be dramatically revised downwards.

Critics of state subsidies might retort that Germany's Condor – the only European airline serving Namibia – could replace much of this economic benefit without leaning on taxpayers. It flies from Frankfurt to Windhoek twice weekly with Boeing 767s, and plans to add a seasonal Munich service next year.

But, in reality, few countries would cede control of their most strategic international air link to a foreign-owned budget carrier that could drop frequencies at will.

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While Air Namibia is willing to absorb losses on the Frankfurt route for now, neither it nor any other carrier attempts to connect Windhoek with destinations in the Americas, the Middle East, North Africa, Asia or Australasia. The country's geographical isolation and modest demographics are ill-suited to links with these regions.

Far-flung visitors instead typically connect via Johannesburg in South Africa – one of seven points that make up Air Namibia's regional network – the others are Cape Town; Luanda; Harare and Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe; Lusaka in Zambia; and Maun in Botswana.) That could change over the coming years, however, with Air Namibia targeting first Nairobi and later Istanbul as a springboard for global connectivity.

Gsponer said a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Turkish Airlines (THY) – originally disclosed in April 2014 – has resulted in THY agreeing to extend its Istanbul-Nairobi service with a fifth-freedom connection to Windhoek.

The launch of the route will kick-start a multi-phase codeshare agreement, later seeing Air Namibia take control of the Windhoek-Nairobi leg with A319s. The final phase will see its A330s deployed on nonstop flights to Istanbul – thereby unlocking one-stop access to THY's global network.

"Turkish Airlines are helping us to establish the route, and then later on we can become the feeder [to Istanbul]. It will take maybe three years," Gsponer explained, adding that parallel talks are under way with one central European and one Middle Eastern carrier. "If we don't decide to have a feeding strategy, we will become a [solely] regional player."

Re-launching West African flights is also on the wish-list, although the loss-making Accra service would only be restored in conjunction with a new link to Lagos, Nigeria.

Air Namibia is handicapped by several legal and operational constraints.

"Ghana alone is not a viable route. So we're working with the Nigerian and Ghanaian governments, and only when we have achieved fifth-freedom [rights] for both Nigeria and Ghana will we do another business study," he explained. "We would go maybe three times a week via Lagos to Accra, and three times a week via Accra to Lagos."

Beyond the limitations of its small home market, Air Namibia is handicapped by several legal and operational constraints. Strict labour laws have slowed efforts to reduce its headcount, forcing management to accept a 'natural' decline as employees retire or leave voluntarily. The workforce is down from 745 last year to about 650 today, Gsponer said, and "ideally should be below 600".

Night-time flying restrictions are another unwelcome bugbear.

But as the low-cost model gradually sweeps across Africa, Namibia's flag-carrier still has time to strengthen its turnaround and embark on a long-term path to sustainability. Distinguishing its full-service offering from the more spartan products now entering the marketplace will be key.

"We don't want to be a low-cost carrier. We want to be a quality airline with a high-class product," Gsponer concluded. "I'm not sure that we are five-star all the time, but we aim to be five-star. And there is demand for our type of service."

LOW-COST, HIGH HOPES

Flyafrica is rapidly spreading its wings across the continent, picking up some high-profile backers – and opponents – along the way. **Martin Rivers** *checked in with chief executive Adrian Hamilton-Manns for an update.*

Just one year into operations, pan-African low-cost carrier Flyafrica is making good on its ambitious growth plans by launching a new subsidiary in Namibia and securing political backing for a third offshoot in Gabon.

The airline group, which began flying from Zimbabwe in July 2014, is headed by chief executive Adrian Hamilton-Manns and part-owned by South African arms dealer Ivor Ichikowitz. Its business model involves setting up franchises across Africa through joint-venture agreements with local partners.

But, despite spreading its wings faster than London-listed competitor FastJet, which first exported the European low-cost model to Africa in 2012, the group has not been immune to the continent's regulatory headwinds.

Flag-carrier Air Namibia fought tooth and nail to block Flyafrica from establishing a local subsidiary in Windhoek, first delaying its launch and later convincing the High Court to ground flights just two days into operations.

"They've thrown every stone they possibly could in the road to stop this," an infuriated Hamilton-Manns said shortly before Flyafrica Namibia's inaugural service on September 2.

"These guys are perennial Pinocchios. They say one thing and they continually lie. They attacked us even on safety, and that is the traditional no-go ground of airlines globally. Everyone observes the same rules, because we're all committed 100% to safety."

After seeing off the flag-carrier's earlier challenges, Flyafrica Namibia issued a gloating press release entitled 'You can't keep a Namibian down!' in which it confirmed the new launch date. Yet its success was to be short-lived, with the High Court deciding on September 4 that Flyafrica lacked the proper paperwork for its new Windhoek-Johannesburg service.

The court told the start-up that its operating permit was not valid for flights to South Africa's main hub, OR Tambo International Airport. The licence is, however, valid for Lanseria Airport, a secondary airport near Johannesburg, as well as other destinations such as Cape Town.

"Air Namibia has again used dirty tactics to stop competition so it can continue to charge unreasonable fares for bad service," Flyafrica said in a scathing statement after its flights were grounded. "We can always operate from a low-cost airport [Lanseria] if we wish to. Until we decide, we will honour the judgment and not fly from OR Tambo."

Elsewhere on the continent, Gabonese president Ali Bongo Ondimb confirmed in August that Libreville would become the group's first West African base.

"My vision for Africa has always been that of an integrated continent," he said. "An Africa where every citizen has the opportunity to afford air travel and take advantage of the benefits of being economically mobile. The launch of Gabon FlyAfrica.com, a pan-African airline, is an important step in implementing this vision."

No date was provided for the inauguration of the Libreville-based franchise, which was described as a strategic partnership between the Gabonese Government and Ichikowitz's Paramount Group.

But, notwithstanding the difficulties in Namibia, Flyafrica has largely avoided the kind of bilateral delays that plagued FastJet during its ramp-up. The group's first flight in Zimbabwe was an international service to Johannesburg, and it quickly gained approvals for Lusaka in Zambia and Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Flyafrica Zimbabwe is a joint-venture with local infrastructure firm Nu.com.

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Talks for a fourth subsidiary in Mozambique, meanwhile, continue to gather steam, prompting Hamilton-Manns to sound a positive note about low-cost prospects across the continent.

"Everyone says Africa is different. It's not," he insisted. "The concept of the consumer wishing to tailor-make their product and wanting the cheapest fare possible is universal. You have some challenges around distribution, infrastructure – accepted – but you do not have challenges around the basic consumer demand of cheap travel."

He said the group currently has five Boeing 737s Classics, two of which are deployed in Zimbabwe and one in Namibia. "When we add West Africa, we will need five more aircraft, so that will give us ten within the next 12 months."

However, while the outlook is promising, Flyafrica can expect to encounter heightened competition in the form of a reinvigorated FastJet. Its competitor's fleet will double in size to six Airbus A319s by the end of 2015 – ending three years of stagnant capacity – as new offshoots in Zimbabwe and Zambia get off the ground.

GROWING FORCE HITS NEW HEIGHTS

The MiG-21 is still the mainstay of the Namibian Air Force.

Jon Lake *looks at how the current Namibian Air Force developed from almost nothing just a few years ago.*

Namibia (formerly known as South West Africa) didn't have its own independent armed forces before the country gained independence from South Africa in 1990. Before that the South West Africa Territory Force (SWATF) came under South African command, while the country hosted South African forces engaged in the long-running war in neighbouring Angola.

The Angola accords were signed in Luanda on December 22 1988, bringing the Angolan Civil War to an end and leading directly to Namibian independence.

In November 1989 SWAPO won 57% of the votes in the Namibian General Election and requested British help in setting up defence forces following the formal gaining of independence on March 21 1990.

The People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), the armed wing of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and the South West Africa Territory Force were demobilised and many of their members were recruited into the new unified Namibian Defence Force (NDF).

Though engaged in fighting former National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) guerrillas and separatists in the Caprivi Strip, the new army was unnecessarily large, but it was necessary to employ the surplus soldiers and former guerrillas before they were discharged.

Most white South African and SWATF officers left, and a 55-strong British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT) was deployed to Namibia on March 26 1990 to begin training a leadership cadre for the newly forming 1st and 2nd Battalions, between April 17 and June 2. The new defence force was set up along British lines, using British ranks.

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Namibia inherited a great deal of infrastructure from the South Africans, who had built a number of major airfields (with 7,000-7,500ft asphalt runways capable of accommodating fast jets, including Mirage IIICZs, Mirage F1AZ/CZs, Buccaneers and Canberras). These included (going from west to east) Ruacana, Ondangwa, Rundu and Mpacha.

Grootfontein, in the northeast of the country, was used by the South African Defence Force as the main logistics base, supplying the four northern bases. It had asphalt runways, the longest of which was 8,800ft. There were also airfields at Walvis Bay (7,000ft runway), Keetmanshoop (7,600ft) and Karibib (8,500ft).

The first aircraft to be purchased by the Namibian Government was a Dassault Falcon 900B, delivered in July 1992 for presidential use, though a number of helicopters and aircraft used by the previous administration were also transferred to the new government.

When founding president Sam Nujoma commissioned the NDF Air Wing on June 23 1994, it was very small, with fewer than eight pilots – all expatriates – and a handful of aircraft.

Six former USAF Cessna 0-2A light observation aircraft were delivered to the Air Wing at Windhoek's Eros Airport on June 26 1994, and were used in the anti-poaching, anti-smuggling and coastal surveillance roles. They augmented a Sikorsky S-61L helicopter, delivered during 1993, and a Reims Cessna F406 delivered during 1994 and operated by the Ministry of Sea Fisheries for patrol and rescue operations.

Over the years, the Air Wing was developed and expanded with a view to establishing a fully fledged air force. Extra personnel were recruited and new equipment was acquired.

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) handed over four military helicopters during November 1994. These comprised two HAL Chetaks (licence-built

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The Namibian Air Force was formed just over ten years ago, in March 2005, but still relies on ageing equipment.

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SA316B Alouette IIIs) and two HAL Cheetahs, (licence-built SA315 Lamas). One of the Chetaks was painted white and used for VIP transport, while the Cheetahs were used primarily in the training role.

At the beginning of 1995 the Government of Namibia took delivery of a Gates Learjet 31A for VIP use.

During 1996/97 an order was placed for two Harbin Y-12II light transports, delivered by Chinese crews in December 1997. This order followed a demonstration flight for the president of Namibia and senior members of his government in a Harbin Y-12II belonging to the Zambian Air Force during early 1996.

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The NDF Air Wing made its operational debut during late 1998, when a number of helicopters and a Harbin Y-12 Transport aircraft were deployed to the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the Second Congo War (1998-2003). They were used to support Namibian troops deployed to support the forces of president Laurent Kabila against the rebels.

During the weekend of January 16/17 1999, two Namibian helicopters (believed to have been a Chetak and a Cheetah) collided in bad weather, killing nine occupants, including five Namibians, two pilots and three technicians.

The NDF was originally expected to have taken delivery of four HAL Chetaks in January 2000. This did not happen. But, following the loss of the second of the original HAL Cheetahs, which crashed near Opuwo on August 1 2008, HAL announced a $10 million order for two Chetak and one Cheetah light utility helicopters for the Namibian armed forces on June 10 2009. These were commissioned in April 2012.

Namibia's air transport capabilities were bolstered by gifts from Libya's colonel Gadaffi in the period prior to the inauguration of the African Union in South Africa. Two Antonov An-26s were delivered in 2001, followed by two Mi-8s and two Mi-24/35s in June 2002.

One of the Mi-8s was subsequently damaged beyond repair in a very heavy landing on November 27 2003, while one of the An-26s was damaged after crash landing at Omega airstrip in November 2013. This aircraft now seems to have been repaired or replaced, with Googlemaps showing two An-26s at Grootfontein in 2015.

Long-standing plans to grow the NDF Air Wing into an independent Air Force were set in train in the late 1990s, with preparations for the formation of a fast jet combat air element.

Two MiG-23s were seen at Grootfontein in January 2000, though it now seems more likely that they were deployed from, or loaned by, the Angolan Air Force, and quite probably flown by Angolan pilots. Nothing has been seen of the MiG-23s since then.

An order for four NAMC K-8 Karakorum jet trainers was placed late in 1999. Indications are that four were delivered (though some sources suggest that 12 were ordered and delivered) and the quartet has since been seen flying from the main international airport. The exact sub-type of K-8 remains unknown, but the aircraft are believed to be similar to those operated by Pakistan, with Martin Baker ejection seats, western avionics and systems and Honeywell engines.

Projects are under way to expand the Keetmanshoop Air Base, as well as to construct a new base at Karibib.

Namibia received two MIG-21bis fighters, and one MIG-21UM two-seat trainer in 2002. The aircraft were then serviced by IAI in Israel, where spotters noted two MiG-21bis and a single MiG-21UM on April 14 2002. The aircraft were reportedly returned to Namibia in 2006, though three MiG-21s were seen in a flypast at the formal commissioning ceremony that accompanied the official formation of the Namibia Air Force on March 13 2005.

The commissioning of the air force was retrospectively back-dated to 2002, but it was officially declared that June 23 should continue to be commemorated as the Namibia Air Force Day, albeit with 2002 as the baseline date.

The new force was led by Air vice marshal Martin Pinehas – Air vice marshal being the highest rank in the Namibian Air Force.

The air force's role was to operate in support of the Army and the Navy, flying in the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), transport and training roles, and providing support to the civil authorities. It has assisted in transporting electoral material and personnel during national elections. It has also flown foreign heads of state during their stays in Namibia.

In August 2005, the newly established Namibian Air Force ordered Chinese-built Chengdu F-7NM and Guizhou-built FT-7NG aircraft. Reports suggested that 12 aircraft had been ordered (or 12 plus two twin-stickers), but other sources suggest that just six single-seat F-7NMs were delivered, with two twin-stickers.

The FT-7NG trainers were delivered in November 2006 and the

The NAF has two Harbin Y-12s (left). Pictured right is an Alouette III helicopter, of which it also has two.

single-seaters between 2006-2008. Some sources suggest that eight more F-7NMs may be on order.

The F-7NM is an export version of the J-7G, which was a further improved derivative of the J-7E, with a one-piece, wrap-around windscreen, a more powerful engine and provision for a licence-built Russian helmet-mounted sight. The J-7E had introduced a cranked or 'double Delta' wet wing, with extended span outer wings of reduced sweep. This gave improved manoeuvrability and take-off performance, as well as reduced drag and increased range.

The aircraft are believed to be equipped with the less powerful Italian Grifo-7 radar, and not the newer Grifo MG, which offers longer range and improved multi-target tracking capability (against up to eight targets), and not the GEC Skyranger, or the Chinese KLJ-6F radar with BVR capability.

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Like earlier F-7 'Airguards' they are believed to have a British head-up-display weapon aiming computer (HUDWAC), and other western avionics equipment.

The aircraft serve with the 23rd Squadron, the primary air defence unit of the Namibian Air Force.

With Grootfontein as the main air force base, projects are under way to expand the Keetmanshoop Air Base, as well as to construct a new base at Karibib.

A more controversial procurement came in October 2011, with the delivery of a Dassault Falcon 7X to replace the presidential Falcon 900. Negotiations started in 2007, and the first down-payment was made when the contract was signed at the end of 2008.

Whereas the purchase of a VIP-configured AW139 in September 2004 attracted little public comment, the cost of the Falcon led to much criticism, even though the aircraft it was replacing was more than 20 years old, having flown more than 5,000 flying hours. The old aircraft has reportedly been sold, realising nearly half of the price of its replacement.

ORDER OF BATTLE

Presidential Flight	Falcon 7X, AW139, Lear 31B	Eros Airport
Training Squadron	K-8	Eros Airport
151st Squadron	Chetak, Cheetah, Z-9, Mi-8, Mi-25	Grootfontein
23rd Squadron	F-7NM/FT-7NG	Grootfontein
Transport Squadron	An-26, Y-12	Grootfontein
Squadron	Cessna O-2	Grootfontein

While the Falcon 900B carried 14 passengers, the 7X can carry 19 passengers, and can fly directly from Windhoek to London or Paris without any stopovers. Its increased range makes the Falcon 7X more cost-effective, avoiding stopover landing fees and often-exorbitant fuel prices in some African countries.

The Namibian Air Force helicopter squadron (the 151st squadron of the 15th Wing) was bolstered by the addition of a pair of Harbin H425 helicopters, which were handed over on April 20 2012. The H425 is the newest VIP version of the Harbin Z-9.

The Namibian Air Force deployed a flight of helicopters (consisting of one Harbin Z-9 and two Chetaks) to Zimbabwe to assist during the February 2014 floods at Tokwe-Murkosi in Masvingo. The mission lasted seven days, in which 600 residents were airlifted to safety, and the helicopters also carried 56tonnes of supplies.

One of the two H425s crashed on April 11 2014, killing five of the eight people on board.

In September 2014, it was announced that the Namibian Government had deployed three Falcon unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to support anti-poaching operations by the NDF as part of a new more "aggressive" approach. It has not been revealed whether these unmanned aircraft are operated by the air force.

In addition to its flying units, the Namibian Air Force has an Air Force Technical Training Centre (AFTTC) at Grootfontein Air Base. This provides technical training for the air force's ground personnel, and runs training programmes in conjunction with the Namibian Aviation Training Academy.

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An Air Force School of Air Power Studies was inaugurated in February 2015. It will offer six-month training courses to members of the Namibian Air Force and to cadets from other countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, forming part of Namibia's contribution towards promoting peace and security and integration in the region.

Today, the Namibian Air Force has about 40 pilots, all Namibians, and about 30 aircraft – 12 of them fast jets.

The air force participated in the Namibian silver jubilee independence celebrations in Windhoek on March 20 2015. The accompanying flypast included a formation of helicopters, with a Z-9/H425 and two Chetaks carrying national and armed forces flags, accompanied by a Cheetah. The flypast also included K-8 trainers, which trailed red, yellow and green smoke, flanked by a pair of F-7NMs, and with an FT-7NG tucked in behind. ■

The US 'doing business in Africa' initiative is showing some signs of promise. **Keith Mwanalushi** *was at June's Paris International Airshow to witness the signing of a new joint venture between AAR Corp and South African Airways Technical.*

AAR leads US into Africa

The maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) sector has become, over the past couple of decades, a fiercely competitive environment within the context of a shrinking global village and ever-changing demands from customers where price, service, expertise and turnaround times are business-critical selling propositions.

Even in Africa, which accounts for a tiny portion of the MRO sector, the handful of players are pushing for increased commercial viability.

US-based airframe maintenance and supply chain solutions provider AAR Corp is present in around 60 locations around the world and now it is looking towards Africa to expand further. AAR and South African Airways Technical (SAAT), the maintenance division of flag-carrier South African Airways (SAA), have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish a joint venture (JV) partnership to reduce costs and increase operational efficiencies of the airline's fleet.

The JV will also focus on growing SAAT's MRO services to third-party customers/airlines across the continent.

AAR chairman and CEO David Storch (left) and Musa Zwane (right), CEO of SAAT (right), seal the deal at the Paris Air Show.

"This is a very important stage for us and we are most proud to be announcing this venture with South African Airways," said AAR Corp CEO David Storch.

Under the agreement, AAR will provide operational analysis and technical assistance for MRO and warehouse facilities and integrate IT solutions, including AAR's 1MRO software suite.

"South Africa represents a growing market and a really great opportunity for us to expand our MRO capability and supply chain actively to a growing market," said Storch.

SAAT has undergone several decades of change as the business climate in South Africa and the world continues to evolve at a rapid pace. Its market segments include major airframe checks, engine overhaul, mechanical components, avionics, training and certification, and line maintenance. Its main operational base is Johannesburg with similar services in Cape Town, Durban and other regional airports.

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SAAT CEO Musa Zwane said he was grateful for the opportunity to partner with AAR and was hopeful that the new venture would help expand the business in Africa. "In fact, not only in the African continent but other continents too. We were looking for a partner in the MRO space and we believe we have found the right one in AAR."

Africa is home to six of the top 10 fastest growing countries in the world and US exports to the sub-Saharan region now top $21 billion a year. President Obama has openly said he believes that sub-Saharan Africa can be the world's next major economic success story, offering enormous opportunities for American businesses.

Storch praised the US Government for being instrumental in helping AAR secure the South African deal and added that the agreement was the result of a lot of effort to put together a programme that would be beneficial not only to the United States but also to South Africa.

Marcus Jadotte, assistant secretary for the US Commerce Department, which helped AAR navigate the business, cultural and political landscape under the White House's 'doing business in Africa' initiative, said: "This is an important agreement because not only does it bring an American firm to SAAT but also it brings those capacities to the African continent."

He recognised that Africa is a growth market and an area with increased focus from the US.

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AAR ouvre la voie des États-Unis en Afrique

Les initiatives des États-Unis pour faire du business en Afrique sont prometteuses. **Keith Mwanalushi** *a assisté à la signature d'un accord entre AAR Corp et South African Airways Technical (SAAT) au dernier salon de Paris-Le Bourget.*

Le marché de la MRO est devenu très concurrentiel au cours des deux dernières décennies. Les clients ont des demandes très versatiles. Le prix, le service, l'expertise et le TAT sont des critères vitaux pour les campagnes de vente.

AAR Corp et SAAT ont signé un MoU pour établir une société commune visant à réduire les coûts et accroître l'efficacité opérationnelle de la flotte de la compagnie sud-africaine.

Cette JV proposera également des services à d'autres clients. Selon l'accord, AAR Corp apportera son expertise opérationnelle et une assistance technique.

« L'Afrique du Sud est un marché en croissance et offre une réelle opportunité pour renforcer nos capacités », a déclaré David Storch, directeur général d'AAR Corp.

« Ce partenariat facilitera notre développement dans le pays et sur le continent », a ajouté Musa Zwane, PDG de SAAT.

L'Afrique abrite en effet six des dix pays à plus fort taux de croissance au monde. Le président Obama a clairement affirmé que l'Afrique subsaharienne pourrait connaître le prochain grand succès économique du monde, offrant d'énormes possibilités pour les entreprises américaines.

SAAT et AAR Corp étudient également la possibilité d'ouvrir un second shop MRO en dehors de l'Afrique du Sud, mais rien n'a filtré sur sa localisation. Ils souhaitent aussi capter de la charge hors du continent.

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Musa Zwane souhaite renforcer le processus pour opérer de façon plus rentable et être en mesure d'accepter des contrats de compagnies externes. Le développement des synergies entre SAAT et d'AAR Corp sera aussi un véritable catalyseur.

Enfin, David Storch et Musa Zwane ont reconnu l'épineux problème de pénurie de compétences techniques, en particulier en Afrique. Investir massivement dans la formation permettrait d'y remédier en partie. SAAT et d'AAR Corp comptent ainsi établir un centre de formation d'excellence en Afrique.

AAR will help SAAT strengthen its processes, operate more cost effectively and thereby sell its services to third parties in a competitive marketplace.

"The president has created a panel to advise him on increasing trade and engagement with Africa. We view this as a component of that effort to expand economic engagement from the United States with South Africa and the continent."

Asked about the length and value of the deal, Storch, who sits on the president's advisory panel, was adamant that the relationship with SAAT would be a lasting one. "In terms of the economics, let's just say they create value for South Africa but also for AAR. We see it as a win-win relationship. It's a meeting of the minds," Storch said.

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Both parties are exploring the possibility of opening a second MRO facility outside South Africa but at present remain tight-lipped about the location. However Storch confirmed that they were "exploring certain countries".

"The South Africans like to expand their capability throughout Africa but we also want to attract business from outside the continent," he said, adding that the goal was to create a world-class, high-energy, low-cost MRO operation in South Africa and export outside the continent. "Then we also want to take this capability and expand inside the continent as well," he said.

In terms of capabilities, Zwane said that, currently, feedback looked at the A320 family, A330 and A340s. "We'll also have capabilities on the A380s but on the line maintenance side." He also added 747s and 777s to the list. However, importantly, Zwane pointed out that SAAT already maintains these aircraft.

"With AAR and this partnership, we will be able to strengthen our processes so that we can operate more cost-effectively and only then will we be able to sell the capability outside. I believe we can benefit from that," Zwane explained.

With regards to synergies, Zwane is confident that the deal will enable both SAAT and SAA. "If we are able to provide a cost-effective service to the airline then we can reduce our maintenance costs, and I'm sure that will help them expand in terms of the fleet that they are looking for."

Both Storch and Zwane acknowledged the problem of the global technical skills shortage, particularly in Africa, and indicated that part of the solution was to go big on training. Zwane said: "We do have a technical training school and one of our goals is to establish that as a centre of excellence in Africa. We also believe that this partnership will aid us in that dream to get people across the continent trained so that they can participate in the area." ■

The opportunities for beneficial change in Africa's air traffic control systems have never been better but will only be realised if governments back up fine words with solid actions, the latest CANSO Africa conference heard. **Alan Dron** *was there.*

Opportunity knocks for liberation…

More than 25 years after the Yamoussoukro Declaration, it now looks more likely that Africa might finally liberalise its skies.

That was the view of Jeff Poole, director general of the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO) speaking at the organisation's third Africa conference in Durban, South Africa.

"Transport ministers have backed the African Union's proposal to set up a single African air transport market by 2017," he said. "The implementation of the Declaration – the 1999 decision by African transport ministers to liberalise access to air transport markets in the continent – will promote the sustainability of the industry through seamless and harmonised airspace, greater efficiencies and reduced costs."

However, Poole cautioned that Africa's governments had to put more effort into actually making the declaration a reality.

"We can only hope that this time – finally – states will actually follow through with their commitments," he said.

"We are seeing signs that ministers have at last recognised the economic benefits of air transport in Africa – something that CANSO, as part of the cross-industry Air Transport Action Group (ATAG), has been advocating for some time."

Poole said that, when he was a small boy, he heard stories about how "the wind of change is blowing through Africa" – a reference to a 1960 speech by British prime minister Harold Macmillan in Cape Town, in which he warned the South African Government that the apartheid system was no longer viable.

"That was a long time ago but the idea stuck with me as my love for Africa and my knowledge of it grew with time. Much has indeed changed in this amazing continent in the last 50 years, not least here in South Africa.

"But in many senses aviation in Africa has not changed – it has been stuck in a time warp due to many political, institutional and infrastructure barriers. However, I am an optimist by nature and I feel that, if not a wind of change, then certainly a strong breeze is beginning to blow through aviation across the African continent right now."

He said CANSO was "cautiously optimistic" about this greater willingness among governments and their industry partners to change and to make real progress on problems facing the continent's aviation and air traffic management.

"Governments across the continent are now recognising the significant economic and social benefits of air transport. The recent decision by transport ministers to back the African Union proposal to set up a single African air transport market by 2017 is a sign of this shift."

He noted that the cross-industry body ATAG had produced an economic study that calculated that air transport currently supports almost seven million jobs across Africa and contributes more than $80 billion in gross domestic product (GDP). By 2032 this was forecast to grow to 10.5 million jobs and $168 billion in GDP contributions.

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"This is all good news for Africa and offers many opportunities for our industry. Despite the present stalling due to economic and other issues across the continent, including the impact on Nigeria of the low oil price, we will see significant growth in air traffic. Last year air navigation service providers handled close to one million flights in Africa and air travel in the continent is expected to grow at more than 5% per annum.

"Our challenge, therefore, is how air traffic management will manage this growth, safely, efficiently and cost-effectively. We all know that there are some very real safety, capacity, operational, technical, infrastructure and financial challenges."

This year's conference theme was 'moving towards sustainable and safe air traffic management in Africa'. Delegates discussed finding ways to build sustainable aviation infrastructure and to address future capacity demands – in the air and on the ground – in a sustainable manner.

Speakers noted that the global air transport management industry was transitioning from a government-controlled sector to a more competitive, liberalised operating environment. However, with governments still owning all the air navigation service providers (ANSPs) in Africa, government support to improve aviation links both within Africa and outside was crucial, said captain Mpho Mamashela, chairman of South Africa's ANSP, Air Traffic and Navigation Services (ATNS).

He also noted that the growth of aviation in Africa meant that the industry would start to face problems that have been part of the European and North American landscape for years, such as the environment and noise. The industry had to work with local communities to consider the impact of noise and show that it was a responsible corporate citizen, he said.

Operational advances were under way, he said. In South Africa, ATNS had doubled its volume of traffic handled through the employment of reduced vertical separation minima (RSVM) without any accidents. Also, continuous climb and continuous descent operations (rather than the traditional 'stepped' methods) had been introduced for some city pairs, resulting in less noise, fuel burn and lower emissions. Required navigation performance (RNP) approaches and departures at Cape Town were saving 500kg of fuel per approach, he revealed.

Chris Zweingathal, CEO of the Airlines Association of South Africa, noted that while many people described Africa as 'the continent of opportunity', Africa itself had yet to seize that opportunity.

African nations were making life difficult for themselves by continuing to restrict freedom of movement, notably with restrictive visa conditions. Like Poole, he said that, while every conference on the subject urged relaxation of those restrictions, nobody acted on those recommendations.

The opportunities remained, he said. Eight of the world's 20 fastest-growing economies were in Africa, yet just 3% of the world's aviation business took place on the continent. And 82% of African international air traffic was carried by non-African airlines.

IATA was projecting relatively modest profits of $100 million for all of Africa's airlines, he said and load factors within the continent remained notably lower than elsewhere – just 68% in Africa compared to a global average of more than 80%.

'We can only hope that this time – finally – states will actually follow through with their commitments.' JEFF POOLE

Zweingathal said that development of aviation infrastructure – notably, safe, reliable air traffic management systems – was essential. And he suggested that African ANSPs could look at international best practice in areas such as slot management and procedures to reduce capacity in the event of severe weather.

Among the areas requiring focus, he said, were slow decision-making by national aviation regulators and differences in levels of technology among states.

Sidy Gueye, assistant director, safety and flight operations for the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Africa, said that air traffic management in Africa was still characterised by 50-year-old conceptual approaches, together with a lack of infrastructure covering both airports and air traffic management systems.

Airlines were increasingly seeking 'perfect flight' conditions, such as the addressing of traffic flows from start to finish of a flight, as well as optimised flight profiles that included unrestricted climb, optimum cruise levels and uninterrupted descent profiles.

'Perfect flight' conditions were achievable, he said, but operators needed more visibility of states' implementation plans for improving air traffic management, and technology choices should be based on customers' needs and cost-benefit analysis, to ensure cost efficiency.

As for current navigational aids, non-directional beacons (NDBs) were obsolete, VHF omni-directional range (VOR) should be progressively withdrawn, and those airports having only a non-precision VOR approach should develop a required navigation performance approach instead. Instrument landing systems (ILS) were still required, he added.

Similarly, IATA favoured the adoption of automatic dependent surveillance – broadcast (ADS-B) to track aircraft over satellite-based augmentation systems (SBAS) for cost reasons.

Among other points to be made by speakers during the conference was the need for CANSO members and other ANSPs to cooperate. Silas Silas, director, air navigation services for the Civil Aviation Authority of Botswana, said that those ANSPs with facilities such as training academies should open them up to ANSPs that do not. And staff should be seconded to other ANSPs in order to gain experience. ■

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Les opportunités appellent à la libéralisation

Le potentiel des systèmes de contrôle du trafic aérien en Afrique n'a jamais été aussi propice, mais il se concrétisera pleinement si les gouvernements allient la parole à l'action. Alan Dron nous fait le point depuis la conférence de l'Organisation des services de navigation aérienne civile (CANSO).

Plus de 25 ans après la Déclaration de Yamoussoukro, il semble de plus en plus probable que l'Afrique pourrait libéraliser son ciel. Tel est le point de vue de Jeff Poole, directeur général de CANSO. « Les ministres des Transports ont d'ailleurs soutenu la proposition de l'Union africaine de mettre en place un marché unique du transport aérien en Afrique d'ici 2017 ».

Il a cependant souligné que les gouvernements africains doivent porter cette déclaration pour qu'elle devienne une réalité. L'organisation reste « prudemment optimiste » sur cette volonté des gouvernements et de l'industrie du transport aérien d'améliorer la gestion du trafic aérien sur le continent. Le principal défi est de savoir comment la gestion du trafic aérien va accompagner la croissance économique.

Le thème de l'édition 2015 était : « Vers une gestion sûre et durable du trafic aérien en Afrique ». Comment donc trouver des moyens pour construire des infrastructures et des capacités pour répondre aux demandes de manière durable ?

La croissance du transport aérien en Afrique risque d'être confrontée aux problèmes que connaissent l'Europe ou le continent nord-américain depuis des années à savoir l'environnement et le bruit. Les pays africains se rendent également la vie difficile en continuant à restreindre la liberté de mouvement avec des conditions restrictives de visa.

Les leviers d'une bonne gestion existent. Rappelons que huit des 20 économies les plus dynamiques du monde se trouvent en Afrique. Le développement de l'infrastructure et des systèmes de gestion du trafic aérien plus sûrs et plus fiables sont donc essentiels et doivent être optimaux.

AFRICA: READY,

With 4.9% average gross domestic product (GDP) growth over the past two years in the sub-Saharan region, it is no surprise that Africa is forecast to become one of the fastest growing areas for aviation. **David Adebiyi** *(left) explains how aviation infrastructure is a key enabler.*

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) forecasts that by 2034 Africa will see an extra 177 million passengers a year join a total market of 294 million.

It is, therefore, encouraging that regional institutions (such as the African Union) are putting in place measures to support the growth of the aviation sector.

The African Union decided last year to finally implement the Yamoussoukro Declaration, a long-awaited initiative originally signed in 1999, but evolving from an earlier declaration in 1988 that aims to create a single aviation market across 44 African states.

The agreement provides a great opportunity to allow aviation to become the key enabler to the economic growth of the continent. But is the industry ready?

Lessons can be learned from other high-growth regions facing similar challenges but the resolve to address the issues must come from within and be tackled by governments and the industry as a whole.

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The aviation industry supports some 6.7 million jobs in Africa and generates $67.8 billion in economic activity. Aviation not only creates direct employment, it also drives growth in related industries such as tourism, and underpins the growth in other industries by increasing connectivity.

Despite this, the industry is still not seen as a priority by some governments and not all have made the changes necessary to get the best out of Yamoussoukro. In many countries there are still restrictions on foreign operators, reducing competition and the usual benefits of market forces.

The cost of travel is also inflated through additional airport charges or tickets taxes, up to $50 in the worst cases. IATA CEO Tony Tyler has urged governments to introduce smarter

STEADY, GROW

regulation, legislation to improve consumer rights and to increase connectivity through the provision of transit visas. All of these issues potentially inhibit growth.

Even if governments can create the right environment, growth will be constrained unless safety and security issues are addressed. The need to improve both is acknowledged as a priority.

According to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Africa is the worst performing region with an accident rate many times higher than others. There are already a number of regional initiatives under way, including the comprehensive regional implementation plan for aviation safety in Africa (AFI Plan) that involves numerous stakeholders and is already producing results.

In many states, there is also a need to improve safety oversight, to progress the separation of the regulator and service provider, and to properly implement state safety programmes and safety management systems.

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While Africa's accident rate remains higher than the global average, there are some positive signs of progress. The continent suffered no jet hull losses in 2014.

Another subject of real concern is the urgent need for investment in critical infrastructure, particularly airports and communication, navigation, surveillance/air traffic management (CNS/ATM) facilities. This is potentially more difficult to address and in many places will require substantial investment.

While there are some exceptions, Africa has had a long history of under-investment. A number of new airports have been or are being developed. However, these are not always well planned and do not always best serve the needs of the airlines or wider industry.

Investment in CNS/ATM infrastructure is even more difficult, given that part of the infrastructure [airspace] is an 'invisible asset' and too often the poor cousin of the airports that it serves. In many cases, a regional or sub-regional approach would help to ensure interoperability, improve efficiency and make cost savings.

The Agency for Aerial Navigation Safety in Africa and Madagascar (ASECNA) is a good example where Africa is leading in terms of regional collaboration. ASECNA is an air traffic control agency based in Dakar, Senegal. Comprising 18 countries, it was created in 1959.

Introducing this collaborative approach across Africa will require better planning and cooperation,

The control tower at O.R.Tambo International Airport. Unfortunately there are few so well-equipped in Africa and that need to change as liberalisation approaches. In the foreground is a Beech 1900D.

including more effective airport and CNS/ATM master planning at both national and regional level. Many airports and air navigation service providers (ANSPs) are updating their master plans or are planning to update, but the ability to implement these ideas will be the critical factor.

The introduction of new technologies might make implementation easier, especially if it means reduced capital expenditure.

Charles Schlumberger of the World Bank agrees. He sees it as a real opportunity for developing countries to advance their aviation infrastructure using technology that can be applied cheaply and is less costly to maintain. He cites satellite-based technology as a good example but there are others, including remote towers, which could support safe, efficient and cost-effective service delivery, providing significant benefits at a fraction of the cost of conventional ATM systems.

Where significant investment is required, the inability to access funding also creates a barrier. This doesn't have to be the case. Governments that have created a stable investment environment and have implemented policies to encourage foreign direct investment have successfully built new, or upgraded existing, airports through the privatisation or part-privatisation, including those in Congo, Gabon and Cote d'Ivoire operated by Egis.

Development banks also have funds to support the development of other infrastructure. The European Investment Bank's €40m ($44.6m) loan to ASECNA in late 2012 is a good example.

But, even here, there can be challenges. Patrick Dlamini of the Development Bank of Southern Africa told the audience at the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO) Africa Conference in Durban earlier this year that banks are often frustrated because projects presented are not considered 'bankable'.

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This might just be because of the way they are structured, or because there is no obvious source of additional revenue to repay the loan, or the bank is unable to secure a sovereign guarantee. Many of these challenges could be overcome by early engagement and a more structured approach.

Investment in infrastructure alone will not overcome all of the challenges. Similar to other regions, Africa has a shortage of aviation professionals and is losing some of its best talent to neighbouring regions. This, in itself, will prevent many of the other challenges being addressed and will increasingly become more of an issue unless aviation is seen as a credible career.

There are, however, clear signs of progress. Much of what needs to be done has already been achieved somewhere on the continent.

While international organisations and the global aviation industry have a key role to play, a lot can also be achieved locally and organisations such as ICAO, IATA, the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) and CANSO must continue to ensure that best practice and lessons are shared through regional initiatives. Experience from other regions tells us that solutions developed and delivered locally will be more successful in the long term.

DAVID ADEBIYI

David Adebiyi is a principal consultant at Helios. Based in Dubai, he oversees a wide range of projects for regulators, airports and ANSPs throughout the Middle East and neighbouring regions. Helios is an aviation consultancy focusing on air traffic management and airports. The company is part of Egis, a $1bn global infrastructure consultancy, engineering and operations group with an extensive aviation offering. Egis have been supporting the aviation industry in Africa since 1951 and has offices throughout the region.

Malgré des retards et des incertitudes concernant son financement, la mise en service du nouvel aéroport international Blaise Diagne du Sénégal est prévue pour décembre 2015. Le point avec **Vincent Chappard**.

Le Sénégal ambitionne de devenir un hub régional

La construction de l'Aéroport International Blaise Diagne (AIBD) du Sénégal est l'un des ouvrages les plus importants réalisés en Afrique de l'Ouest. Le Sénégal souhaite devenir un hub régional par le biais de cette nouvelle infrastructure qui va remplacer l'aéroport international Léopold Sédar Senghor de Dakar. Ce nouvel aéroport permettra de répondre aux prévisions du trafic d'ici 2025 tout en garantissant des possibilités d'extension. La gestion du trafic aérien de l'actuel aéroport disposant d'un unique « taxiway » constitue de toute évidence un frein au développement du transport aérien.

Le financement a été réalisé par des banques de développement (via un groupement de huit banques conduit par la Banque Africaine de Développement) et la Banque Islamique de Développement (BID). Le remboursement du prêt se fait à l'aide d'une redevance dénommée RDIA (Redevance de Développement des Infrastructures Aéroportuaires) mise en place par décret le 28 février 2005. Cette redevance est prélevée sur le billet de chaque passager au départ du Sénégal.

Le projet a été lancé en 2006. Selon un document de l'APIX, le coût total du projet, pour la phase 1, est estimé à 300 millions d'euros (200 milliards FCFA). l'AIBD bénéficiera de trois aérogares : la première de 4200m² sur deux niveaux pouvant accueillir trois millions de passagers par an, la deuxième d'une capacité de 50 000 tonnes sera réservée au fret alors que la troisième sera dédiée aux pèlerins. Il pourra traiter 80 000 mouvements d'avion annuellement. L'aéroport AIBD sera équipé de six passerelles télescopiques et comptera 44 positions de stationnement pour les avions. La piste de 3500 mètres de longueur permettra d'accueillir les avions gros porteurs (Airbus A380, Boeing 787).

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Ce projet constitue un enjeu capital pour le développement du Sénégal, le tourisme en particulier.

« La réalisation d'une infrastructure de cette envergure est primordiale pour le développement économique de notre pays, en ce sens qu'elle va inéluctablement contribuer au désengorgement de la ville de Dakar qui regroupe 25% de la population sur 3% du territoire », soutient Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr, ministre du tourisme et du transport aérien du Sénégal.

Le Sénégal peine en effet à retrouver son rang dans le tourisme mondial. Les touristes, en particulier les Français, sont aujourd'hui très réticents à se rendre dans un pays qu'ils associent à tort à certaines destinations africaines considérées à risques. Le pays est aujourd'hui victime d'un amalgame avec ses pays frontaliers (à savoir la Mauritanie et le Mali) et est également confronté aux effets néfastes de l'épidémie du virus Ebola malgré l'absence de cas déclarés dans le pays.

L'aéroport AIBD est aussi situé à proximité des grands centres touristiques comme la station balnéaire de Saly Portudal et les futures stations Mbodiène, Joal Finio et Pointe Sarène. Il jouera ainsi un rôle prépondérant dans le développement de ce secteur. Placé au cœur des périmètres de production maraîchère et halieutique, l'AIBD facilitera également l'exportation des produits issus de ces activités et par conséquent favorisera la création d'emplois et de richesses.

Ce projet, porté par Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr, traduit la volonté des autorités sénégalaises de doter le pays d'une infrastructure aéroportuaire des plus modernes et des plus performantes en Afrique de l'Ouest.

L'aéroport favorisera l'émergence

Vincent Chappard *revient avec Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr, ministre du tourisme et du transport aérien du Sénégal sur la construction du nouvel aéroport AIBD et sur son apport dans le développement du transport aérien.*

Vincent Chappard : Quel est l'objectif de ce projet et comment contribuera-t-il au développement du Sénégal ?

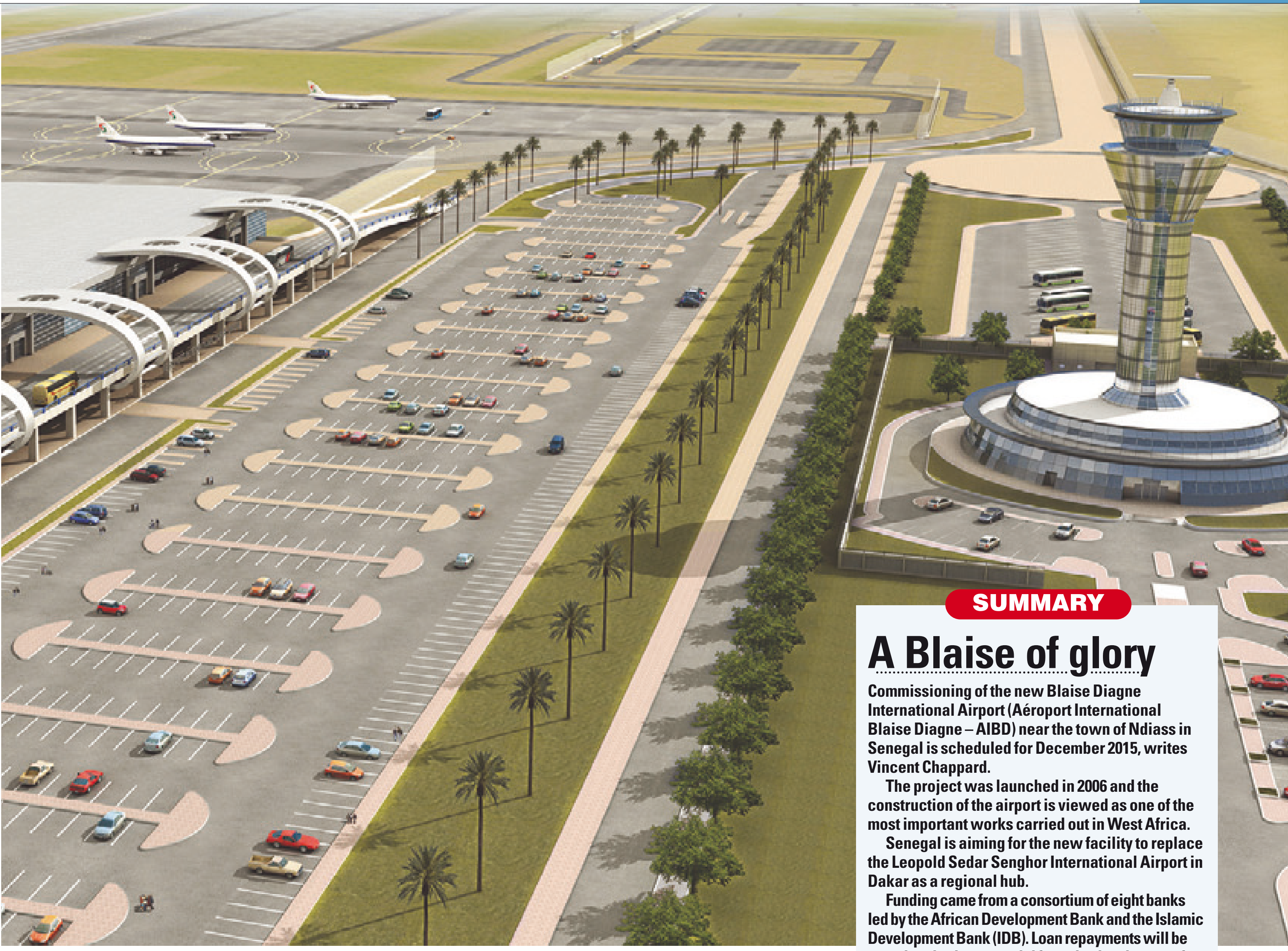
Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr : Avec une capacité annuelle initiale de trois millions de passagers, le nouvel aéroport a pour objectif de faire du Sénégal un hub de premier plan dans la région, tout en répondant aux standards internationaux les plus récents tant sur le plan de la sûreté, de la sécurité et de la qualité de service. La construction de l'Aéroport International Blaise Diagne va ainsi favoriser l'émergence d'un deuxième pôle économique à l'extérieur de la capitale. l'AIBD sera un nouveau pôle économique intégrant l'industrie touristique, les nouvelles technologies, les zones d'aménagements économiques et industrielles, la pêche, l'artisanat et les produits maraîchers.

VC : Où en est le projet de construction ? Quelle est la date de mise en service ?

ADS : Aux derniers constats, on était à un taux d'avancement de 85%. La dernière date de livraison donnée par l'entreprise Saudi Ben Laden Group (SBG), est décembre 2015.

VC : Le projet a pris du retard, quelles en sont les raisons ?

ADS : Le projet de l'AIDB a pris du retard pour deux



d’un deuxième pôle économique

raisons : la mise en place tardive du financement liée à un montage ayant posé un problème au début du projet et à certaines lenteurs liées à sa mise en œuvre, c’est le lot que peut rencontrer tout projet de grande envergure.

VC : Quand et comment se fera le transfert de l’aéroport Léopold Sédar Senghor vers l’aéroport Blaise Diagne ?

ADS : Le Premier ministre a mis en place un comité de transfert au niveau national. L’Agence Nationale de l’Aviation Civile et de la Météorologie, en relation avec le gestionnaire de l’actuel aéroport-ADS, l’ASECNA et la société du projet AIBD ont commencé à travailler sur les aspects techniques du transfert depuis près d’un an. Les aspects techniques sont, de manière générale, facilement maîtrisés. Il y a les aspects sociaux à prendre en charge. Il est évident qu’il y aura un dialogue social avec les partenaires qui sont aujourd’hui autour de la plateforme actuelle.

VC : La compagnie nationale Sénégal Airlines traverse de grandes difficultés tant financières que sociales. Comment comptez-vous y remédier ?

ADS : L’Etat est entré dans une politique de relance et de restructuration de Sénégal Airlines. Nous avions une option de liquider l’entreprise et d’en recréer une autre, mais le chef de l’Etat Macky Sall a estimé que le Sénégal ne doit pas être un cimetière de compagnie aérienne. Nous avons donc décidé de restructurer à partir de l’existant.

VC : On évoque également un partenaire pour Sénégal Airlines ?

ADS : Le Sénégal est en pourparlers avec plusieurs partenaires. Cependant rien n’a encore été défini. La relance de Sénégal Airlines permettra de renforcer la position du Sénégal comme un hub régional.

SUMMARY

A Blaise of glory

Commissioning of the new Blaise Diagne International Airport (Aéroport International Blaise Diagne – AIBD) near the town of Ndiass in Senegal is scheduled for December 2015, writes Vincent Chappard.

The project was launched in 2006 and the construction of the airport is viewed as one of the most important works carried out in West Africa.

Senegal is aiming for the new facility to replace the Leopold Sedar Senghor International Airport in Dakar as a regional hub.

Funding came from a consortium of eight banks led by the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Loan repayments will be completed using a special fee – the development fee of airport infrastructure, which means a charge is levied on each passenger ticket from Senegal.

This new airport will meet the forecasts of traffic by 2025, while ensuring opportunities for expansion.

AIBD will have three terminals. The first is 4,200sqm on two levels to accommodate three million passengers a year; the second will be reserved for freight and have a capacity of 50,000tonnes, while the third will be dedicated to pilgrims.

The airport will be able to process 80,000 aircraft movements annually.

AIBD airport will be equipped with six air bridges and have 44 parking positions for aircraft. The 3,500metre runway will accommodate large aircraft (up to Airbus A380, Boeing 787).

“The development of an infrastructure of this scale is essential for the economic development of our country, in that it will inevitably contribute to the decongestion of the city of Dakar,” said Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr, minister of tourism and air transport Senegal.

The wreckage of an aircraft on the overgrown airport apron gives an idea of the uphill struggle facing Tripoli's dream of revival.

Libya's post-revolution civil war has crippled the country's aviation sector, with airports and aircraft damaged by fighting and all international carriers forced to withdraw from the Libyan market. A year after intense clashes destroyed Tripoli International Airport, the Airports Authority is planning to build a semi-permanent terminal and get international flights back up and running.
Tom Westcott *reports from Tripoli.*

Libya takes up the fight to rebuild

It is one year after Tripoli International Airport was caught up in a battle between rival militias, which saw Libya's embryonic civil war spread across the country. Planes still lie in charred pieces on the runway, the air traffic control tower is riddled with holes from heavy artillery fire and the burnt-out terminal building has become a haven for birds.

After the 2011 revolution, which overthrew long-term dictator Muammar Qaddafi, armed groups that had fought in the uprising were tasked with providing security across the country.

Militias from the town of Zintan controlled the airport and some parts of the capital, while groups from the city of Misrata were in charge of securing other areas of Tripoli. However, during three years of post-revolutionary instability, tensions mounted between these former allies.

In July 2014, Misrata militias led an attack on the airport to expel the Zintan forces, and five days of intense fighting at the airport and three weeks of clashes in the surrounding area resulted in devastating losses for the aviation sector. The Zintan forces withdrew allowing the Misrata militias to advance on the capital 30 kilometres away, resurrecting the former parliament and creating a new government in opposition to the internationally recognised institutions.

While flames engulfed the terminal building, hangers were bombarded with heavy weaponry and aircraft worth millions of dollars were assaulted – sprayed with bullets, set ablaze or

Wreckage lies everywhere, but the new terminal building is rising from the ground and in the hangars there is hope as a A Libyan Airlines engineer patches over bullet holes in an Airbus A320. Each repair is done to Airbus specifications to ready the plane for a singe flight to an official Airbus workshop in Europe.

climbed over by fighters who posed for photos on the fuselage. Ten aircraft were completely destroyed and a further 10 damaged severely, with others sustaining minor damage.

A year later, on the fringes of the ravaged airport, engineers are now hard at work patching up the aircraft bullet holes. The Airports Authority has been working on plans to rebuild the ruins of the former terminal to create a semi-permanent replacement that could enable international operations to resume.

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"We have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for rebuilding the terminal and work is expected to start at the end of this year," said Libya Airports Authority director of air transport affairs Ibrahim Wali. The MoU is between the ministry of transport and Libya's state-run Organisation for the Development of Administrative Centres (ODAC).

"They are still negotiating, so the final contract has not yet been signed but its value will be a minimum of LYD 100 million ($72 million)," he explained, adding that this could extend to as much as LYD 300 million ($216 million).

"As well as the terminal buildings, there is a lot of maintenance work to be completed and we will have to meet the minimum international requirements and regulations." The airport's air traffic control system and tower – riddled with holes from artillery fire – also requires a complete overhaul, as does the fire-fighting area and equipment. The airport's two runways, however, were not damaged by the fighting and remain intact, needing only modest maintenance.

After discussing three different options, ODAC has decided on a two-floored semi-permanent terminal, with the capacity to handle around three million passengers. "The concrete sections of the terminal were not damaged so the new design will fit around these, incorporating some of the old structure," Wali said. "The departure lounge will be new but the arrivals hall will be the same because this was not badly damaged."

The work will be subcontracted to foreign partners, he explained. With European companies still reluctant to work in Libya, not least because no European embassies have missions in the country at present, Wali predicted that the partner companies were likely to be either Turkish or Egyptian.

"This will be a temporary terminal that could last between five and eight years, basically until the French company working on the new airport can return," Wali explained.

In 2007, a contract with an estimated value of LYD2.54 billion ($1.8 billion) for the expansion of Tripoli International Airport was awarded to French company Aeroport de Paris International (ADPI), with works undertaken by Brazilian firm Odebrecht in a joint venture with Turkish and Greek companies. "The new airport should have been finished by the end of 2015. The contract still exists and these companies will come back, they have to, but they can't come back yet," he said.

In the wake of four years of post-revolution instability, successive faltering governments and an on-going civil war, the country is on the brink of economic collapse but, Wali insists, there is money to fund the rebuilding of the airport. "The money is already there as ODAC had another project with the Libyan Civil Aviation Authority (LYCAA) which is stable, so the money for that project will be transferred to this one," he explained. "The money is there and work on the new terminal is expected to start by the end of this year."

In preparation for this, clearance operations by a Libyan scrap metal company are already under way.

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For those working at the airport, being surrounded by the destruction is a daily reminder of the high cost of those first few weeks of civil war. "It's such a pity," said Ramadan Malti, chief engineer for Libyan Airlines – one of the country's two state-owned operators. "In total 12 of our planes – four A320s, an A330, two ATRs and five CRJs – were damaged and some are beyond economic repair."

Malti heads a team of nearly 40 engineers who, working in shifts,

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The arrivals hall, which was only lightly damaged, will be incorporated into the new semi-permanent terminal.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 97

have spent the last six months patching up an Airbus A320, riddled with bullet holes and shrapnel damage. "We have almost finished this one. It has taken about six months to make these temporary repairs and it should be ready in another month," he said. These repairs will ready the aircraft for a single flight to an Airbus workshop in Europe, where the damaged fuselage will be replaced.

At the other end of the airport, engineers for Libya's other state-owned carrier, Afriqiyah Airways, are also repairing three planes. "We started working on this Airbus A319 in October last year," engineer Abdullah Al-Tershani explained. "This one needed almost 50 individual repairs."

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The process is time-consuming, he said, with dimensions and photographs of each damaged area being sent to Airbus for confirmation that the proposed repair is acceptable.

Other aircraft bombarded by missiles and bullets at the airport were already redundant. Abandoned planes, some dating back to the Kingdom of Libya, had been a feature for decades and more were left to deteriorate during Qaddafi's 42-year rule, when sanctions made the acquisition of spare parts difficult.

One western plane enthusiast visiting the airport in 2013 suggested an aviation museum would attract many international visitors but now even many of these historic aircraft have been ruined.

The on-going civil conflict continues to have an impact on the country's aviation sector. Tripoli's former military airbase of Mitiga now serves the capital but, Wali said, it is no substitute for the sprawling former international airport. "Mitiga is being used only by Libyan carriers because it has little infrastructure and is not security-cleared for international flights," he pointed out.

Despite a capacity for around 3,000 passengers it struggles to manage these, with services characterised by delays and cancellations. However, as Wali said: "It is better than nothing."

Mitiga has just one option for Europe – an often fully-booked service to Malta on an 18-seater Beechcraft 1900D aircraft, owned by Libyan-Maltese joint-venture Medavia.

Based in Malta, Medavia is the only international operator now serving Libya. "There were 24 foreign operators before the revolution and after the revolution there were 13. But now only Medavia and Libyan carriers fly here," he said, adding that most travellers preferred to drive overland to neighbouring Tunisia from where they could fly to Europe.

Mitiga is one of 18 Libyan airports, only six of which are still operational, most suspended by the LYCAA because of nearby fighting or security issues.

The closed airports, lack of international flights and reduced domestic services have caused problems for many Libyan citizens.

With no trains or a proper system of buses, aviation had previously acted as public transport, with cheap government-subsidised flights connecting remote towns and cities in the vast country.

Wali hopes that, if the area surrounding Tripoli remains peaceful, the rebuilding of Tripoli International Airport could start as early as this autumn. "It should take about eight months to finish, maximum one year, and could be operational by the middle of 2016," he said.

"We are losing money but so are many people whose jobs relied on the airport, from cafe owners to taxi drivers. The problems last year affected a lot of things and we hope that rebuilding and reopening the airport will give international companies the confidence to come back to work in Libya."

The completion of a major construction project such as Tripoli Airport and the prospect of returning international companies could offer hope to people across Libya, a country which, after decades of neglect and four years of instability, is in urgent need of extensive rebuilding.

As Ndola, on Zambia's Copperbelt, waits for a new $500 million ultra-modern airport, the management team at its current airport, Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe International (NLA), are hoping to offer 21st century aviation services using vintage infrastructure. **Humphrey Nkonde** *reports.*

VINTAGE 'PORT...

NLA, like Zambia's other three international airports, is controlled by the state-managed Zambia Airports Corporation Limited (ZACL).

The land-locked country's other three international airports are Mfuwe, mainly serving South Luangwa Game Park; Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula, near Livingstone's Victoria Falls; and Kenneth Kaunda, in the capital, Lusaka.

Formerly Ndola Airport, NLA has six large aircraft parking bays, which are used by local and international airlines, private and charter aircraft.

The airport's greatest assets are its parallel concrete runways – 10L/28R (2,515m x 46m, 8,250ft x 150ft) and 10R/28L (1,219m x 23m, 4,000ft x 75ft) – which has provided it with double orientation in passenger and cargo transport.

NLA was constructed by the British colonial government in 1938 and served as a military base for the Royal Navy's active flying squadrons during World War II.

To this day, the original terminal, with its dome-shaped roof, reminiscent of the Nissen huts common at old military facilities, signifies the airport's beginning.

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Ancillary structures have been added but one of the Nissen huts is also being used by international and local airlines as a concourse for bookings, using electronic ticketing, and partly as a lounge for domestic passengers.

The old control tower is still in use as an office for the airport's security wing.

Use of the old tower fits into the airport's marketing strategy of using vintage infrastructure, as it can attract tourists interested in the history of the British Empire and World War II.

NLA uses a chalkboard flight display, while airports in Lusaka and Livingstone have advanced to electronic ones.

Another historic aspect about the former Ndola Airport is that the DC-6B aircraft, carrying the second United Nations Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld, who was on a peacekeeping mission in the Congo, should have landed there in the early hours of September 18 1961.

The crew communicated to the control tower their intention to land before the aircraft crashed, instantly killing Hammarskjöld and 14 other aides, as well as burning about 80% of the fuselage of the aircraft that Transair Sweden AB chartered to the UN.

Passenger statistics for the past five years at (NLA) – Source Zambia Airports Corporation Limited (ZACL).

Year	Passengers	% change	Movement
2010	161,173	-	-
2011	212,093	31.6	50,920
2012	224,483	5.8	12,390
2013	256,882	14.4	32,399
2014	266,702	3.8	9,820

The 16th passenger, Sergeant Harold Julien, a UN security guard who survived the crash but died a few days later, told Ndola Central Hospital officials and the police that there was an explosion before the plane crashed.

Plans are under way for Ndola to have an ultra-modern airport on a 2,000-hectare piece of land on the outskirts of the city, requiring slightly more than $500 million to develop.

Designs have already been developed by Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC).

One reason advanced for the relocation is that NLA has no space to extend runways.

"Wide-bodied aircraft require longer runways," said airport manager Joseph Mumbi. "We cannot extend because of residential housing developments around the airport."

There is also no space for a new terminal building, airport hotel, warehouses and housing units.

ZACL has, over the years, been relying on income from airport services; the reason a mixed investment strategy has been crafted in order to earn revenue from non-aeronautical infrastructure such as the airport hotel and houses.

Ndola, Copperbelt's headquarters, is the gateway to the fast-growing mining region of North Western Province.

It is also a few minutes' flight to Congo's Lubumbashi and a gateway to small provincial airports within Zambia in Mansa in Luapula Province, Solwezi in North Western Province and Kasama in Northern Province.

Copperbelt's largest airport also serves as a facility for technical stops and refuelling for regional airlines.

In spite of using vintage infrastructure, NLA, located 3km from the Ndola's central business district, is serviced by Africa's major airlines, including Star Alliance members, Ethiopian Airlines and South African Airways.

Ethiopian Airlines, using Boeing 737-800s and 737-700s, has daily flights on a triangular route plan from Addis Abba's Bole International Airport to Ndola through Lubumbashi.

From Johannesburg's Oliver Tambo International Airport, South African Airways uses Airbus A319-100s for flights to Ndola four times a week on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Using Boeing 707-700, Kenya Airways has direct flights into Ndola from Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport seven days a

week, while South Africa's Airlink, with British Aerospace Jetstreams in its fleet, has everyday flights between Ndola and Johannesburg.

Proflight Zambia, which also uses British Aerospace Jetstreams, is the only local airline with scheduled flights present at NLA.

The airport has been handling more than 200,000 passengers annually since 2011, double the 2009 total. In 2014, the number increased to 266,702.

Mumbi noted that although a large proportion of cargo landed at Kenneth Kaunda International Airport, most of the clients were located on the Copperbelt.

He said NLA was capable of handling cargo for the Copperbelt and North Western Province directly from Europe, or through air hubs in Nairobi and Addis Ababa.

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Mumbi explained that it was possible for aircraft, such as Ethiopian Airlines' Boeing MD-11CF cargo aircraft, to land at the current facility since it uses concrete runways.

That feature played a role in the airlifting of copper and receiving of fuel from Dar-es-Salaam after Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) gained independence from Britain on October 24 1964.

On November 11 1965, Ian Smith, the late prime minister of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), announced a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI), which resulted in the closure of borders between Zambia and the then Southern Rhodesia.

As a result, Zambia could not access South African ports for its copper exports to global markets and fuel from a refinery in Umtali in Southern Rhodesia.

Proflight Zambia is the only local scheduled airline present at Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe International Airport. The DC-6B carrying the second United Nations Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld, communicated to the control tower in the background before it crashed on September 18, 1961.

Left: Engineers working for the Zambia Flying Doctor Services at Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe International Airport complete minor maintenance works.

PICTURES: HUMPHREY NKONDE

The late Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe, then Foreign Affairs Minister in President Kenneth Kaunda's government, was brave enough to blame Britain's failure to intervene following Smith's pronouncement.

It was no coincidence that the fifth president, Michael Sata, on September 28 2011 re-named Ndola Airport after Mr Kapwepwe.

Hosted at NLA, the Zambia Flying Doctor Service (ZFDS) benefited from the transformation of the former Ndola Airport to civil aviation from military services.

In 1965, Dr James Lawless proposed aviation-based medical services and Dr Kaunda's government made ZFDS a state-run institution by an Act of Parliament in 1967.

During the 1960s to the 1980s, ZFDS mainly handled maternity and general trauma cases in hard-to-reach rural areas, mostly in the country's northern half.

However, since the 1990s there has been a shift towards road-based accidents due to increased use of motor vehicles, under-utilisation of rail transport and population growth.

A combination of old and new trends in ZFDS' health service delivery has altered its aviation services, requiring additional helicopters and continued use of fixed-wing aircraft.

The Zambian Government is in the process of acquiring an ambulance helicopter for ZFDS so that it can respond to road accidents, while the three other helicopters would be used by the Zambia Police Service for security operations.

One problem with Zambia is that it does not have an established company specialising in advanced aircraft maintenance repair and overhaul (MRO), even at its main international airport in Lusaka.

ZFDS, which has a hangar at NLA, can develop a greater MRO capability since it has space at one of Zambia's busiest airports and aircraft maintenance engineers. ■

Luggage check: dogs need just three seconds per bag to sniff out illegal items.

The dogged detectives...

Gabon led the way and now Tanzania is following suit, using specially trained dogs to sniff out the bad guys in the fight against illegal wildlife poaching. **Steve Knight** *reports.*

Wagtail UK Ltd and its subsidiary, Conservation Dogs, have announced a new detection contract in Tanzania, signalling another significant move in the fight against Africa's poachers.

The announcement came three years after a small feasibility study in Gabon proved that properly trained dogs, in the right hands, could make a significant dent in the illegal trade.

That study turned into a full-scale contract the following year when Conservation Dogs became the first company to work with the Gabonese National Park Agency, The Ministry of Water and Forests, and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in Gabon to train and supply a team of anti-poaching dogs.

Over the last couple of years, the dogs have regularly swept a number of pinch points in Gabon capital Libreville and its surroundings, sniffing out endangered wildlife and plant species.

Accompanied by their trained handlers, they search luggage at the international airport and make checks at the train station. They also sniff containers at the city port and can be deployed at roadblocks, picking up scents inside vehicles.

Adam Vizard, Wagtail's UK/Overseas Operations Manager, explained: "We have been working closely with local authorities to support them in an attempt to combat illegal activity relating to endangered species – our dogs are trained specifically to detect concealments of ivory, pangolin scale, shark fin, bush meat and iboga root, as well as other products of animal origin.

"They have been prolific in assisting with the searching of all manner of air cargo in locations such as Libreville Airport, as well as personal luggage prior to it being loaded on the aircraft and at baggage reclaim."

Now, thanks to the dogs' on-going success, the service is being opened up to include Tanzania.

"Wagtail is working alongside the WCS in the detection of products of animal origin in Gabon, so it was natural that we would want to replicate that success in Tanzania," explained Vizard. "Our dogs are trained to be handled by local WCS dog handlers and work very hard to be the best at what they do."

Wagtail International, which was established in 2003, is one of the UK's leading suppliers of detection dogs for UK and international operations. The company holds a UK Home Office licence to store drug scents and explosive scents for the purposes of detection dog training.

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Conservation Dogs was set up as a centre for the training of anti-poaching and wildlife detection dogs. It uses the same skills already proven with Wagtail's tobacco, drug and people detection dogs.

The Gabon team have had phenomenal success with finds of ivory, pangolin, shark fin and illegal bush meat.

Across central Africa, 76% of the forest elephant population is estimated to have already been lost to poaching, with an estimated decline of 30% in Gabon. Some commentators have likened the illegal trade in ivory to being similar to drug smuggling.

It was this high elephant poaching pressure, together with the illegal trade of animal skins and other wildlife products, that drove Gabon to look for inventive ways to improve the detection rate. Because the challenges associated with curbing the illicit trade in wildlife are similar to those of illegal drugs, the Gabonese National Parks Agency looked to similar methods used by customs and police, which is why the dogs were chosen.

To date dogs have chalked up finds of ivory in checked-in luggage, pangolin hidden inside a truck, several sacks of shark fin hidden within other fish products and large hauls of illegal bush meat from a railway station, and on a road check point. ■

No hiding place: Lumi and handler search cargo in Gabon.

Since its formation in 1993, Airports Company South Africa has grown into a widely admired airport management company. **Keith Mwanalushi** *reports from Johannesburg that growth in Africa is high on the company's agenda.*

A CONTRACT TO EXPAND

Although Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) is majority-owned by the South African Government through the Department of Transport, the company is legally and financially autonomous, which means it operates under commercial law.

By 2010, it had completed what was its most ambitious infrastructure capacity development and improvement programme.

"Basically, we went through quite an infrastructure investment period leading up to the World Cup," explained ACSA chief operating officer Tebogo Mekgoe.

All of South Africa's airports used to be owned and operated by the state until 1993, when nine were reassigned to ACSA. Mekgoe recalled that prior to the World Cup most emerging markets (before economic growth came) had underinvested in infrastructure. "But when economic growth came, they started to invest in infrastructure and they were in exactly the same position as South Africa before 1994."

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ACSA operates South Africa's nine principle airports, as well as airport management and operating concessions in India and Brazil. "Our success overseas came from governments being very decisive on how they are modernising their infrastructure," Mekgoe said, adding that the Indian and Brazilian governments structured proper private public partnerships that allowed people to bid for concessions.

In 2006, ACSA and a consortium comprising the Indian company GVK and South African-listed company Bidvest, won a concession to manage Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai. Six years later a landmark 20-year concession agreement was signed in Brazil to manage São Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport.

One of the runways at Cape Town International Airport is to be realigned with the other to allow parallel operations, increasing capacity.

"We asked ourselves how we could take our experience here to go into developing markets, particularly in the African continent," said Mekgoe. "What we are finding in Africa is you probably have to move away from thinking that governments will take on these concessions."

The growth strategy is centred on strengthening and expanding existing footprints in India and Brazil through new opportunities. The company also intends to focus on developing the African continent's aeronautical infrastructure landscape.

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In March 2014, the strategy did turn to Africa with an agreement in Ghana.

"In Ghana what we intend to do is to explore areas of possible collaboration first; we then get into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in terms of assistance, and that's how we are pretty much approaching the continent," Mekgoe explained. "We are looking at areas where governments have decided that they want private funding.

"So in Ghana we are talking with them around, strategically, how they can position themselves to be a West African hub."

In fact Accra [Ghana] is looking increasingly attractive. For instance, South African Airways (SAA) initiated new A340-600 services to Accra then on to Washington in the US from Johannesburg in August this year. The new route substantially strengthens SAA's presence in West Africa.

"I think they (SAA) have decided Accra is a better stopover than Dakar for whatever reason," Mekgoe added.

The airline said in a statement that the decision to route some of its North American-bound flights to Ghana was based on "sound business principles" as there was considerable demand for passengers wanting to fly from Ghana to the US.

Interestingly, besides celebrating the inaugural flight between Accra and Washington, SAA has also concluded a long-term strategic commercial cooperation agreement with Africa World Airlines (AWA), offering travellers more travel options within the West African region.

Mekgoe confirmed that, aside from Ghana, the company was in talks with a few other governments in West Africa. "We are engaging with Togo right now and also Benin."

> "I think we can diversify quite a bit through advisory services and through business outside South Africa."
> TEBOGO MEKGOE

He added that Uganda also had a couple of requests for proposals around modernising some of its airports.

"Basically what we look at on the African continent is taking an approach that says let's talk about where we can help."

Currently ACSA does not operate any airports in Africa outside those it owns in South Africa. "But we are consulting a lot in terms of technical advice and also helping with some training aspects," Mekgoe said.

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Speaking about the possibility of having a financial stake in other African airports Mekgoe ruled nothing out. "We take any opportunity as it comes and evaluate it."

Some developmental finance institutions that actually finance airport projects insist that ACSA's involvement goes further than just the initial consulting phase. "Some of them will insist that we should consider having a stake in the operation and we will consider that," he added.

"In our current model we don't go for majority stakes, we go for minority stakes. We don't have the balance sheet to own, say, 50% of Sao Paulo."

Recent financial figures from ACSA show that numbers are looking positive. The company has reported an 8.9% increase in revenue in the year ended March 2015.

The group achieved after-tax profits of R1.6 billion ($114,786), albeit a slight decline from R1.7 billion ($121,903) in 2014.

The company has indicated that, in the next three years, it plans to develop a model to secure new business in Africa and other emerging markets, accelerate its sustainability and transformation programme, roll out an information technology strategy and engage with industry players and legislators on the company's regulatory and funding framework.

Looking ahead, Mekgoe said there were no defined aspirations between ownership and just providing services. He stressed that each opportunity would get considered on its own merits. "But we are looking at making a significant portion of our revenue come from outside of what we currently own in the next 10 years or so. I think we can diversify quite a bit through advisory services and through business outside South Africa."

'What we look at on the African continent is an approach that says let's talk about where we can help.'

TEBOGO MEKGOE

SOMMAIRE

ACSA convoite le marché mondial

Depuis sa création en 1993, Airports Company South Africa (ASCA) est très appréciée pour sa performance en matière de gestion aéroportuaire. **Keith Mwanalushi** *nous explique que la croissance en Afrique est prioritaire sur l'agenda de la société.*

Même si l'actionnaire majoritaire d'ACSA est le gouvernement sud-africain, la société est juridiquement et financièrement autonome et opère en vertu du droit commercial.

« Nous avons connu une période de profonds investissements infrastructurels menant à la Coupe du Monde », explique le chef le responsable des opérations, Tebogo Mekgoe. « Les pays émergents ont commencé à investir dans les infrastructures dès l'amorce de la croissance économique ».

ACSA exploite neuf principaux aéroports d'Afrique du Sud, le reste étant géré par le gouvernement. Elle gère aussi l'aéroport international Chhatrapati Shivaji de Mumbai depuis 2006 au sein d'un consortium comprenant GVK (Inde) et Bidvest (Afrique du Sud). Six ans plus tard, ACSA signait un accord de concession étalé sur 20 ans avec le Brésil pour la gestion l'aéroport international de Sao Paulo-Guarulhos. « Notre succès à l'étranger repose sur le type de développement infrastructurel décidé par les gouvernements respectifs », souligne Tebogo Mekgoe, ajoutant que les gouvernements indien et brésilien ont mis en place des partenariats public-privé appropriés et structurés.

La stratégie de croissance est axée sur le renforcement et l'expansion des activités en Inde et au Brésil. La société va aussi se concentrer sur le développement sur le continent africain. Pour cela, ACSA compte cibler les secteurs dans lesquels les gouvernements recherchent un financement privé.

En Mars 2014, cette stratégie s'est confirmée avec un accord au Ghana.

« Nous discutons avec le Ghana pour voir comment le pays peut se positionner comme un hub en Afrique de l'Ouest. »

Accra est de plus en plus attrayante. South African Airways a d'ailleurs lancé en août dernier la desserte Accra - Washington via Johannesburg. Outre le Ghana, Tebogo Mekgoe confirme qu'ACSA était en pourparlers avec le Togo, le Bénin et l'Ouganda.

Actuellement ACSA n'opère pas d'aéroports en Afrique en dehors de l'Afrique du Sud. Dans les prochaines années, elle prévoit de développer un plan pour l'Afrique et d'autres pays émergents, d'accélérer son programme de transformation et de se pencher sur son encadrement financier et réglementaire.

La prochaine décennie sera marquée par la consolidation de ses acquis, l'augmentation des revenus et la diversification du business à étranger.

The World Routes Development Forum took place in Africa for the first time when KwaZulu-Natal was the host at the Durban International Convention Centre. **Ella Nethersole and Alan Peaford** *were there to see the action as airlines, airports and tourism boards came together to share issues.*

Derek Hanekom : "There is a clear disconnect between government departments."

The Routes to African liberation

South Africa's Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom, called on fellow African ministers to recognise the strategic importance of aviation and bring down the barriers to open skies, which would allow the continent to reap the economic rewards of tourism.

Hanekom was giving the opening keynote address at the World Routes Strategy Summit – part of the 21st World Route Development Forum – being held at the Durban International Conference Centre (Durban ICC) in South Africa in September. The event was taking place in Africa for the first time.

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Hanekom was the first of many speakers who echoed the demand for greater liberalisation.

"There is a clear disconnect between government departments," he said. "On the one hand you have the commerce, tourism and economic departments wanting liberalisation and on the other there are ministries of transport wanting protectionism for their national carriers."

According to African Airlines Association (AFRAA) director of commercial, corporate and industry affairs, Dr Koussai Mrabet, only 11 countries of the 44 that signed the Yamoussoukro Declaration (YD) had committed to implementation, despite the African Union making this a priority in 2015.

The creation of an open African airspace has long been on Africa's agenda since the landmark Yamoussoukro agreement in 1988. Despite the accord, non-African airlines today account for 80% of the African market.

Inati Ntshanga, CEO of SA Express Airways, said there needed to be greater transparency in governments about who was responsible for the delays in implementation. "Who is accountable?" he asked. "Who should get fired for not implementing YD?"

Tewolde Gebremariam: "Competition is good but competition must be on equal footing."

Speakers argued that liberalisation would unlock the potential of African carriers and lead to increased intra-African connectivity and stimulate progressive visa regimes. Bodies such as the African Union could also facilitate the formation of regional trade blocs, like the European Union, and leverage the power of collective negotiation, they said.

Ethiopian Airlines CEO, Tewolde Gebremariam, said that non-African airlines had unfair advantage. "Competition is good but competition must be on an equal footing," he said.

African airlines were being hampered. The fall in crude oil prices has been of little relief to African airlines, he added. As fuel is a major input cost in the

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airlines business, the drop in crude oil prices in the past year should have lowered the costs for airlines. "We were paying $4 a gallon for fuel when it was $100 a barrel. We are still paying $4 a gallon now it is around $50. Someone is making the money and it is not the African airlines," he said.

Even historically, African airlines were paying a premium of around 15% on fuel purchases compared to costs at airports outside of the continent.

The Ethiopian Airlines boss said that while other players in the aviation value chain, such as ground-handlers, could be making money, airlines' profits were still squeezed because of too much competition – "sometimes unfair competition".

He went on to argue that there was a lack of transparent pricing mechanisms.

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A progressive economic regulation regime is necessary if the industry is to see a step-change in its growth.

So resolving any disconnect between the aviation industry and its regulators was key for the success of this industry. "This is not always easy," he said, adding that YD implementation was not the only solution. He urged the African Union to " act as a bloc like the European Union".

He said this would allow African countries that do not have their own national or designated carrier to designate a neighbouring airline to fly on their behalf.

And he argued that any carrier should be able to operate within Africa without restriction so that intra-African connectivity could develop to support the economic growth of the continent.

Hanekom had earlier pushed for greater intra-African links.

"We are in the position where our national airlines tend to fly frequently to destinations outside the continent, especially Europe, with far fewer flights to African destinations. This is costly," he said.

"There is change. But that pace in change does not match the desire and readiness for trade and investment from African countries themselves."

Hussein Dabbas, International Air Transport Association (IATA) vice president for Africa and the Middle East, supported this argument. "It is very telling that 23 African countries have open skies agreements with the United States, but zero African countries have such agreements with other African nations."

Four keys to African success

Africa is set to develop the world's fastest-growing travel and tourism market over the next 10 years, alongside Asia-Pacific, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

In his keynote address to Routes, WTTC president and CEO, David Scowsill, said the growth of Africa's travel and tourism industry was on course to reach 4.9% for the sector's direct contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) over the next decade, equalling the growth of the Asia-Pacific region.

"This unprecedented growth rate underscores the strength of the region's potential compared to the estimated forecast increase in other regions over the next decade – notably the Middle East 4.6%; the Americas 3.8%, Europe 2.8% and the overall worldwide growth 3.9%," he said

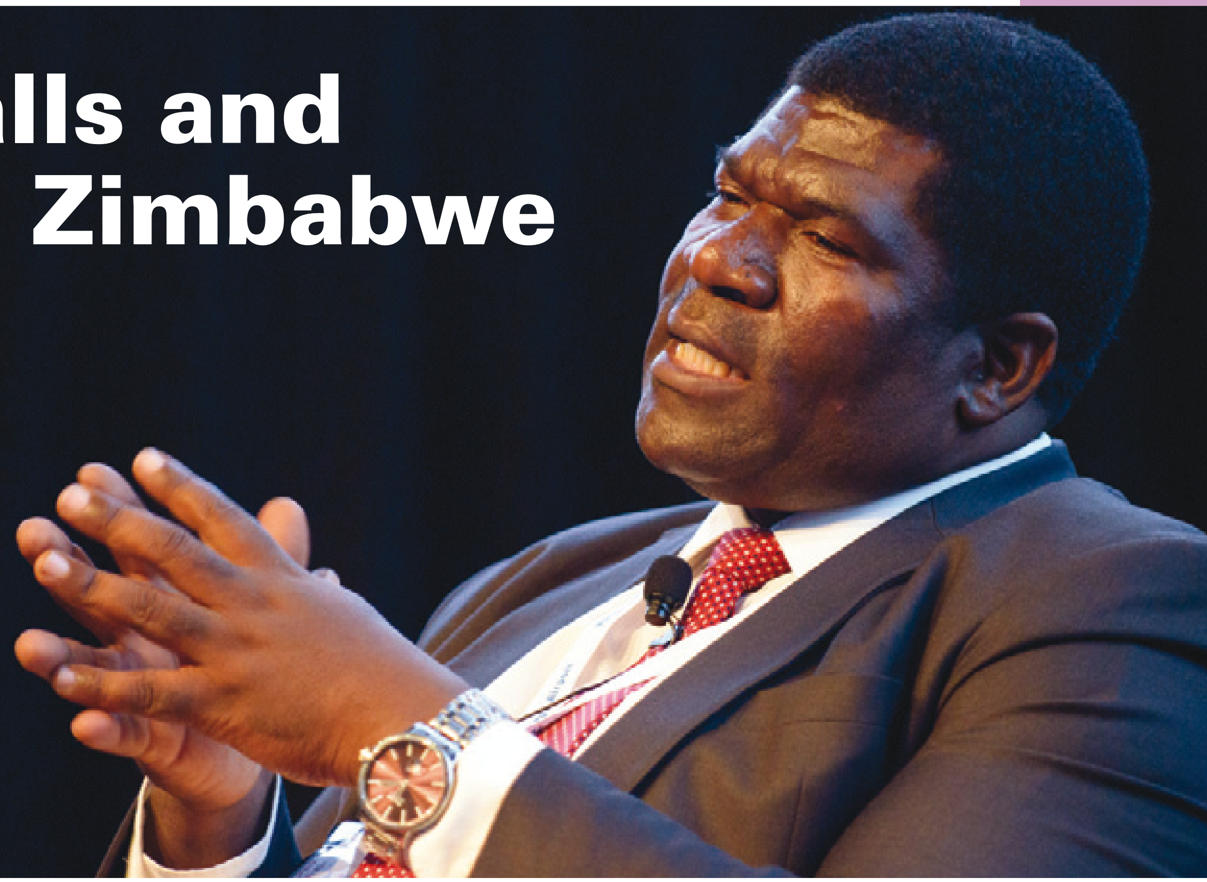
"The world has mostly been focused on Asia-Pacific as the fastest-growing region but our latest figures demonstrate the potential in Africa, which is ripe for investment.

"Africa is home to some of the fastest-growing economies. Tremendous opportunities exist to further expand tourism across the continent, yet growth doesn't happen by itself and challenges remain. To fully realise the expanded potential, African nations must collectively focus on four key areas:

- Expanded investment in tourism infrastructure;
- Improved connectivity and air liberalisation – a move towards a fairer open skies policy;
- Common visas across multiple countries; and
- Investment in human capital to build the capacity and skill set of the workforce.

"The economic potential of tourism in Africa is remarkable but for this to materialise it is critical that individual nations strengthen their unique branding positions to help fulfil the forecasted growth."

The Falls and rise of Zimbabwe



"I will lead a delegation to London later this year to work towards the return of Air Zimbabwe back into the market."
EDMUND MAKONA

The mighty Victoria Falls doesn't really need much of an introduction. However, the Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe was at Routes hoping to make its third largest international airport in the country, Victoria Falls International, just as well known to airlines.

"We're here with good news for the aviation industry," said, Sarudzai Muza, marketing manager for Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe. "We are building a new terminal at Victoria Falls International Airport to support our ever-growing tourism industry."

The airport has a 4km runway that will facilitate wide-body aircraft, as well as a state-of-the-art terminal that will handle 1.7 million passengers a year.

"We want to make this airport the regional tourism hub that can accommodate wide-body aircraft coming in from Europe and other continents," said Muza.

Currently, the country's busiest airport is Harare International, which itself has had a makeover and expansion. "This is our main business airport that handles 1.8 million passengers a year, but we want to increase this to more than two million," said Muza.

Harare International is also the country's business aviation hub, as well as cargo. Muza said: "We are seeing quite a growth in business aviation in the country, mainly business jets coming in from other African countries as well as Asia and Europe. As for cargo, Zimbabwe grows a lot of flowers and tobacco and these are exported to Brazil and much of Europe.

"We have a lot of business opportunities that foreign nationals can tap into, such as mining and agriculture, so we know Harare International will only be getting busier generally."

JM Nkomo International Airport in Bulawayo is the country's second busiest airport and deemed the 'gateway' to Zimbabwe's second largest city and the future industrial hub. Its airport has also recently been upgraded – with a new terminal.

The country's other five airports – Hwange National Park, Charles Prince, Buffalo Range, Kariba, and Masvingo – are regional facilities that have been strategically located to serve the country's popular tourism destinations.

"We have so many wonderful sites in Zimbabwe that it just made sense to try and accommodate the visitors as quickly and as easily as possible," said Muza. "For example, Kariba Airport is located by the famous Kariba Dam on the Zambezi River – one of the world's largest man-made dam walls.

"Hwange National Park Airport is close to our largest wildlife reserve, where visitors can expect to see the 'big five' (lion, African elephant, buffalo, leopard, and rhinoceros).

"Of course, our biggest tourist attraction is the breath-taking Victoria Falls, one of the seven wonders of the world and a World Heritage site. As tourist figures continue to grow, it makes sense to make Victoria Falls International Airport our main tourism gateway."

Zimbabwe bids for London return

A delegation from Air Zimbabwe will be visiting London to discuss plans to resume long-haul flights between Harare and the British capital.

Acting chief executive officer, Edmund Makona, said the resumption of long-haul flights from Harare is the main development target for the carrier and it seeks to work with the local tourism authority to put Zimbabwe back on the international route map.

"I will lead a delegation to London later this year to work towards the return of Air Zimbabwe back into the market," Makona said. "We hope to finalise our long-haul fleet replacement tender by the end of the year but will seek interim capacity to support this proposed route growth."

Alongside its flights between London and Harare, which at their peak were operated on a six times weekly basis but ended in 2012, Air Zimbabwe will also be looking to add flights to its major tourism destination at Victoria Falls.

Makona said there were some "outstanding challenges" which need to be cleared before the carrier could commit to any growth, but is confident that efforts have started to overcome the issue and it could be in a position to launch flights as soon as this happens.

Where aviation aims to be king

The Kingdom of Swaziland is eager to attract airlines to its international airport and allow more visitors to witness what jewels the country has to offer.

Swaziland, known as 'a nation of kings' having had kings rule the tiny country since its beginnings, remains the only nation in Africa to have a monarchy.

Its current ruler is King Mswati III, whose vision to facilitate economic growth to a first world status level, was behind the development of King Mswati III International Airport, which opened in 2014.

In 2009, the Swaziland Civil Aviation Authority (SWACAA) became operational and today manages King Mswati III International Airport, as well as the domestic Matsapha Airport.

The authority was at Routes for what its marketing and corporate affairs director describes as a "dire need to open the country to airlines around the world".

Sabelo Dlamini said: "King Mswati III International Airport is just a baby after being commissioned in March 2014. So we are here trying to establish connectivity and to create new routes."

The one-terminal airport currently serves 320,000 passengers a year but SWACAA hopes to attract 1.2 million annually by 2018.

"The old airport couldn't accommodate certain aircraft size, whereas now, with a runway of 3.6 kilometres, the airport is capable of handling two jumbo jets simultaneously to the safety and security standards required internationally," said Dlamini. "We can receive wide-body aircraft including Boeing 747, Boeing 777 and Airbus 340.

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"The terminal building is capable of meeting all the current flight and passenger projections and is also designed to meet the future needs of the airport to expand and absorb projected passenger and cargo demands for the region.

"The 1,200sqm cargo building is capable of managing the current cargo projections efficiently and is designed to expand according to the airport's future requirements."

Currently, the airport only receives regional airlines, namely South African airlines. "We don't have any international airlines coming in at the moment so we feel it is important to be here at Routes to showcase our state-of-the-art airport," said Dlamini. "We are very interested in the East African and Middle Eastern carriers. There is the ability to redistribute traffic in hubs such as Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Dubai and Doha. Our research shows these are the routes most people take when travelling abroad."

Located close to OR Tambo International Airport, Dlamini said he hopes King Mswati III International could help 'complement' the Johannesburg-based facility.

"OR Tambo International has a lot of congestion," said Dlamini. "As a growing airport we have the room to complement OR Tambo. It is at a point where it targets other things, such as expansion, so the facilities are limited by the demand, whereas it is the opposite for us. We have facilities that need usage."

King Mswati III International also handles a growing private aviation market, with jets coming in, mainly from other African countries, as well as Eastern Europe.

"We have discovered many people like to come in via business jets for the wonderful safaris that Swaziland offers, as well as for business meetings and conferences," said Dlamini.

Muhammed Mehdi Tunc, Turkish Airlines' general manager for South Africa, accepts a gift from Mike Mabuyakhulu, the KwaZulu-Natal Minister for Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs, sealing the partnership between Turkish Airlines and Durban's King Shaka International Airport.

HOST AIRPORT'S DOUBLE CELEBRATION

With host city Durban being in the spotlight during World Routes, its international airport, King Shaka, had double reason to celebrate.

Turkish Airlines and Qatar Airways have both signed up to operate direct flights into South Africa's third largest city.

Turkish Airlines will beat Gulf competitor, Qatar Airways, by three weeks as it announced it would begin four flights weekly between Istanbul and Durban before the end of November 2015. Operating an Airbus A330-300 aircraft, the first six months will operate via Johannesburg.

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Qatar Airways will also be operating a four-times weekly service, as an extension of an expanded schedule between Doha and Johannesburg, from December 17, 2015. It is the second Gulf carrier to link with the east coast resort city, as Emirates operates a daily service. Emirates was the only international carrier serving the King Shaka Airport until Proflight began a Lusaka service at the end of September.

Local stakeholders in KwaZulu-Natal region believe the introduction of flights by Qatar and Turkish will play an important role in their strategy to build sustainable air connectivity and ensure the province becomes a key regional aviation hub.

"This is exciting news for King Shaka International, and for Durban as a city," said Colin Naido, manager of communications and brand at King Shaka International.

"We are part and parcel of a group of organisations that brought Routes to Durban – which has been a three-year-project. There are nine airports in South Africa, but King Shaka is the focal point of this event, and the airport and city has now proved its importance geographically with the signing of Turkish Airlines and Qatar Airways.

"The idea of having Routes and the idea of forming a partnership with the province of KwaZulu-Natal was to develop routes directly into Durban and create more business for the airports and entities."

King Shaka International is still growing after being completed five-years ago. It has a single 3.7km runway and is capable of receiving wide-body aircraft, including the A380.

"The terminal caters for 7.5 million passengers a year but we are currently handling 4.5 million," said Naido.

"A large number of international passengers come via indirect flights, mainly from Johannesburg and Cape Town, but this is no longer good enough – especially as the city is growing in tourism and business. We are also the host city for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, so will have a high number of international visitors.

"Overall, our masterplan, which is in five-stages, is to cater for 40 million passengers to King Shaka International in 60 years time."

Airlines must pay more, says airports boss

The world may face a shortage of vital airport infrastructure in the next 15 years unless regulatory change sees airlines paying a fairer share of airport costs, according to Airports Council International (ACI World).

That was the key message of Angela Gittens, director general of ACI World, in her keynote speech to aviation leaders at World Routes.

According to Gittens, a forecast doubling of global air passenger numbers by 2031 means that decisions about how airports will manage increasing demand need to be made now. However, many airports are struggling to cover their operating expenses and major capital costs, due in large part to a squeeze on airport fees by airlines.

Gittens said: "In many instances, airlines are not paying the cost of the airport infrastructure they use. In fact, we are now seeing some airlines pushing for even lower airport charges, arguing that such cuts would save passengers money and thereby boost employment opportunities. We believe such arguments are flawed and make overly optimistic assumptions of how directly passengers would benefit from such cost reductions."

She said that there had always been a balance of power between airlines and airports. "That balance has now moved from airports to airlines" she said.

"Airports have been resourceful and determined in reducing the cost burden upon airlines. Carriers are already benefitting from two major trends in how airports levy aeronautical fees, with a move away from weight-based charging and increasing itemisation and transparency in fee structures. Airports are now deriving on average 62% of revenues from passengers, through retailing and other activities, and only 38% from the airlines they serve.

"However, airports cannot make the significant investments needed to meet rising demand without greater airline support. To permit this, airports must be able to charge airlines more appropriately. Increased competition, capacity constraints and congestion – especially among major hub airports – have significantly reduced the need for restrictive regulation. Airports must be allowed the freedom to charge airline customers for the facilities they use, ensuring that future demand can be managed safely, securely and efficiently."

ISLANDS ARE A TREASURE

The former Portuguese colony of Cape Verde – the volcanic archipelago of 10 islands and five islets off the coast of West Africa – is just one hour from Senegal.

It is a country with a reputation for achieving political and economic stability, with tourism growing at a steady pace.

While the country only has a population of 500,000 people, it enjoyed welcoming 1.9 million passengers in 2014 to its four international airports and three domestic facilities.

Aeroportos Seguranca Aera (ASA) manages all the airports in Cape Verde from its headquarters in the country's capital, Praia, on the largest island of Santiago. This is also home to the main international airport – Nelson Mandela – the other three internationals being Amilcar Cabral on the island of Sal, Aristides Pereira on Boa Vista, and Cesaria Evora on Sao Vicente.

"We have our own national airline, TACV Cabo Verde Airlines, with a fleet made up of Boeing 737s and 757, as well as ATR 42 and 72, and Embraer 120," said Nadia Helena Spencer, marketing technician at ASA.

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Internationally, the airline flies to Dakar, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Paris and Boston, as well a number of cities in Brazil.

"We have TAP Airlines coming into Cape Verde, as well as package tour companies, including Thompson and Thomas Cook in the UK. The British tourism market is very strong, as is the French. But, while we have tapped into the European market, which is only a four-hour flight away, we are at Routes hoping to attract airlines from Africa," said Spencer.

"Cape Verde is popular for its many beaches, marine life, water sports – including diving among shipwrecks – and for its volcanic mountains, valleys, and lush national parks. It is quite literally an idyllic setting," said Spencer.

Due to the growth in tourists to Cape Verde, with Sal, Boa Vista and Santiago being the preferred islands of choice, Spencer said that tour operators and airlines complained some time ago that the international airports needed more space.

"Nelson Mandela Airport is undergoing a new terminal expansion to cope with the arrivals and departures of passengers," said Spencer.

"Aristides Pereira is also having an expansion and, just last month, Amilcar Cabral completed its terminal expansion. So we are all set up now to welcome more airlines and passengers to wonderful Cape Verde."

Jada L. Cofield

Marcella Nethersole *speaks to BlueSky Airways' cabin-in-flight manager..*

1

Can you tell me a little about the background of BlueSky Airways and when it is expected to start operations?

BlueSky Airways is a new choice airline coming to Gaborone, Botswana.

We will fly scheduled operations in and out of Gaborone into the southern region of Africa, using Boeing 737 aircraft, one of the industry's most reliable and popular aircraft for short to mid-range flights.

We are new to the region but not new to aviation. Our team has more than 50 years of combined experience in knowledge of aviation. Mark Spicer, our MD, saw a need to help connect the southern region of Africa and has put together a group of people who have the same passion. We expect to launch in late 2015.

2

What sort of customers and passengers does BlueSky hope to target?

We would like to attract all types of customers – leisure, business, students, etc.

Everyone, at some point, needs to travel, and we want to be the airline of choice for any and every type of traveller.

One of our goals is to treat the passengers as guests – guests into our country and our guests in the air. We are a team of people who love to fly and we love our passengers. We plan on creating an air eco system of traveller success and repeat clients.

3

Will the airline be a competitor to Air Botswana or will they work together?

Our plan is to work with Air Botswana.

We believe we both have different visions of what we would like to do in the region and, therefore, the differences should complement one another over time and growth.

In order for a country to have a thriving economy, it must have a sustainable and thriving aviation sector. More options for passengers means better prices, more trip frequency, and ultimately more jobs, which in turn generates more income for the local economy.

Competition is a win-win situation for all involved who participate.

4

As a start-up airline, are there any challenges you are facing in the region?

With any new vision, company, or even dream, there will be challenges – either personal, financial or regulatory. However, challenges are meant to be overcome if you have the right focus of what you desire your end result to be. We have had several challenges but none have caused us to stop moving forward.

We have, at times, been delayed, disappointed, and dismayed, but with our faith in our project we will continue to stay determined, and BlueSky Airways is destined to take flight.

5

Can you tell me what your role will involve?

I've come on board with the BlueSky vision to help build and establish the in-flight department. I help train and teach the cabin crew, as well as devise the passenger experience.

I also wear other hats as I work closely with the MD on marketing and aircraft choices. All of these areas have to do with our passenger experience and I want to make sure it is the best.

Not only do I love what I do, but I am passionate about service as well. Service is an old-time advantage that is rare in certain places in the world. People are not treated as if they or the money that they earn matters any more.

I hope we will be able to bring the glamour and joy of air service back into the industry. I'm working closely with our team to build a memorable service down to the cutlery we use and how we say hello. The human factor is the most important in the world and is worth the investment of good service!

‘Not only do I love what I do, but I am passionate about service as well. Service is an old-time advantage that is rare in certain places in the world.’


The largest facilities in the Middle East for civil aircraft, military aircraft and Private Jet on an area of one million square meters
Jet Engine Center 150K lb/Thrust
34 Component Shops
Training Center
2016
Modern Warehouses
Design & Manufacturing Center
Ground Equipment Maintenance Center
12 Aircraft Hangars
2 Bay Hangars
1959