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COVER:
The first Uganda Airlines
A330-800neo is unveiled.
It means the airline can
now branch out into long-
haul operations.
PICTURE: AIRBUS, H GOUSSE,
MASTER FILMS.

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New year offers a new dawn for African aviation

There will be very few among us who would have spent the last day of 2020 looking back over the previous 12 months with any sense of joy.

It has, without doubt, been the toughest of times across the globe with the whole travel, aviation, and hospitality industries bearing the brunt of the commercial strain.

Difficult times lead to difficult decision-making. This is when leaders truly show their worth.

It is when governments, too, face a test. Do they retrench or do they invest? Do they back their airlines, their tourism boards, their airports, and their hospitality businesses – or do they close the purse and cut the strings? Do they leave their airlines – the key to unlocking the rest of the travel and tourism industry – to flounder and gasp their last breaths?

Victoria Moores' coverage of November's AFRAA conference in this issue goes some way to answer that question, as the leaders of Kenya Airways and RwandAir give a fascinating insight into how African airlines can create new opportunities to work together.

It is something that we have talked about endlessly at conferences for as long as I can remember.

Some years back, I remember IATA's Adefunke Adeyemi

showing a chart that revealed the gaps in the African airlines' route networks, all falling over themselves to fly to London, Paris, Frankfurt, Dubai and Mumbai but ignoring possibilities within the continent.

Now there is a realisation that point-to-point is attractive to passengers. And, with airline service standards improving, renewed fleets and new enthusiasm, at last we may see the legacy carriers think again about the potential of Africa.

But, those legacy carriers be warned. There is a new generation of entrepreneurs working with experienced industry veterans who cannot understand why these gaps have been left unreserved.

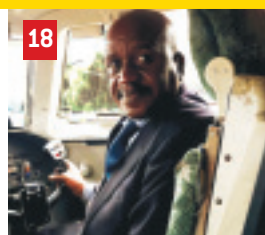
In this issue, there are a number of them taking that step. We see new airlines emerging in the DRC, in Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Gabon, Gambia, Zambia and South Africa. There are deals to be done and governments are open to partnership and support.

For the first time in years there is a real feeling that optimism is justified and this truly is the breaking dawn for a new era in African aviation.

Alan Peaford, editor-in-chief



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Special K: Zone4's K Odom bringing the BAE 146 into freight action from Uganda.

PICTURE: AEROCOMM.

Zoning in on the freight market

Uganda air services business, Zone4, is spreading its wings to enter the freight market.

After a decade of providing services to large-scale organisations from Entebbe for various operations in South Sudan and Somalia, Zone4 began purchasing and leasing out its own aircraft and now, working with the Ugandan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), it is ready to begin cargo operations.

The company's Kaires 'K' Odom has announced plans to acquire five BAE 146 freighters.

"It will be a combination of -300 and -200 freighters," he said. "I think we have found an aircraft that can meet our needs, within the confines of what we do best, which is regional freight applications and contract applications and aircraft leasing."

Zone4 received its air service licence (ASL) in November and the first

Dawn of a new tail for Airlink

Airlink, the privately owned southern African airline, has revealed its new tailfeathers, distinguishing itself as a completely independent carrier.

The new look, which features a distinctively colourful African Sunbird set against a sunrise and dawn sky, follows several recent developments, including the formal re-naming of the company as Airlink.

It signifies the airline's new strategy, as an independent, agile, responsive and financially robust business that is free of any brand association with its former franchise partner, South African Airways.

The new livery will be applied to Airlink's fleet over the coming months.

PICTURE: FLYAIRLINK.COM



aircraft, 5-XAAZ, is in Entebbe in the process of being certified by the Ugandan CAA.

"We're looking at opening up seven destinations right now, including Juba in South Sudan," said Odom.

Egypt backs Ghana airline launch

The Egyptian Government has signed a memorandum of understanding to become a strategic partner in establishing a new airline affiliated with the Ghanaian Government.

Amr Abu El-Enein, EgyptAir Airlines CEO, said: "We are pleased with the confidence of the Ghanaian Government in choosing and preferring

EgyptAir among the major European, Asian and African airlines for this strategic partnership.

The new airline is planned to operate from a headquarters in the Ghanaian capital, Accra.

Nigeria bailout

The Nigerian Government has approved a \$10.3 million bailout for domestic airlines following the adverse effects of Covid-19.

Aviation Minister, Hadi Sirika, said the government had also approved an additional \$2.5 million in funding to aviation agencies.

Sirika also announced that domestic airlines had racked up around \$49.3

million in non-remitted ticket sales charges and passenger service charges to the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority over the past 10 years.

TAAG teams up

TAAG Angola Airlines (TAAG) has signed a new five-year agreement with SITA to roll-out new, faster network connectivity linking all 15 of the carrier's airport sites located in Africa, Europe and Latin America.

Nigeria signs BASA

The Government of Nigeria has announced that it has signed a bilateral air service agreement (BASA) with Morocco, Rwanda, the US and India.

Dash 8-400 milestone delivery

De Havilland Aircraft of Canada has delivered two more Dash 8-400 aircraft to Ethiopian Airlines, taking the fleet total to 30.

"This milestone 30th delivery highlights our confidence in the Dash 8-400 aircraft and is a testament to the joint success in supporting our network and strategic partnerships with several carriers across Africa," said Tewolde GebreMariam, group chief executive officer, Ethiopian Airlines.

"The Dash 8-400 aircraft continues to provide the operational flexibility, exceptional performance capability, capacity and passenger comfort we need."

Air Namibia in survival talks with government

Air Namibia is in government bailout talks. Spokesman, Twaku Kayofa, said: "Our operations have been negatively affected by Covid-19 with decreased travel demand. Furthermore, the continued suspension of our regional and international flights has had a detrimental effect on the airline's already difficult cashflow position.

"We continue to redefine our strategy for the restart of all operations when borders are reopened."

The airline has so far declined to confirm details of a rescue plan.



PICTURE: AIR NAMIBIA

Algeria's Su-57s

Algeria has reportedly signed a \$2 billion contract to purchase 14 Russian Su-57 fighters, becoming the first customer of the fifth-generation stealth jets outside Russia.

According to reports in *Sputnik News*, Russia is expected to start the deliveries from 2025.

A stylized illustration of a woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a vibrant, patterned dress in shades of red, black, and blue. She is holding a matching shopping bag with red handles, which features the AJW logo. The background is a bright blue with a faint, circular pattern and a small airplane icon in the distance.

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ASECNA updates the message

ASECNA, the Agency for the Safety of Air Navigation in Africa and Madagascar, has selected the advanced aviation message-handling system (AMHS) from Frequentis Comsoft to enhance the system for eight African countries.

Cote d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Comoros will all benefit from the most advanced upgrade of their outdated legacy aeronautical fixed telecom network (AFTN) messaging service.

The new system allows the harmonised operation of all messaging services in one application.

Influential African

Ethiopian Airlines CEO, Tewolde GebreMariam, has for the second time been named as one of the 100 most influential people in Africa.

A statement by the airline said: "In his 10 years as CEO of the airline group, we have witnessed fourfold growth. He has also led the airline to successfully manage many existential global crises, including the unprecedented global Covid-19 pandemic."

Green light

The World Travel Market (WTM) Africa will go ahead in Cape Town, South Africa, from April 7-9 this year as a live hybrid event.

Organiser, Reed Exhibitions, said the event would deliver a significant return on investment for exhibitors and provide a platform for live and virtual connection between tourism industry stakeholders engaged in bringing business to Africa.



Quick thinkers: Hadi Akoum presents the award to Tewolde GebreMariam. PICTURE: ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES.

Airbus pandemic award for Ethiopian

Airbus has given the Ethiopian Airlines Group an award for its "unique agility and resilience" amid the Covid-19 global crisis.

Tewolde GebreMariam, Ethiopian Group CEO said: "Airbus has recognised the efforts of the management and employees of Ethiopian Airlines. We were there when the world needed us most."

Hadi Akoum, Airbus VP sales Africa said:

"This award is to express the admiration of Airbus executive management and employees for the unbelievable achievement of Ethiopian Airlines in this unprecedented epidemic. While other airlines were just trying to figure out what to do, Ethiopian was aggressively pressing ahead finding solutions by converting their passenger aircraft to freighters."

Short cut

Kenya Airways has started operating direct freighter services across southern African out of the South Africa Airways hub at Johannesburg OR Tambo International Airport.

The move means that the airline's traffic no longer needs to pass through Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta hub when departing from Johannesburg.

The airline said that it plans to operate directly from Johannesburg to Harare International,

Lilongwe, Lusaka, Maputo, and Dar es Salaam.

Infrared alert

Egypt is to buy an AN/AAQ-24(V)N large aircraft infrared countermeasures (LAIRCM) system from the US to protect its Airbus 340-200 head-of-state aircraft.

The self-protection suite will improve the survivability of the Airbus from missile attacks.

The principal contractor will be Northrup

Grumman and the estimated total cost of the deal is \$104 million.

The LAIRCM system, known previously as Guardian, is an infrared countermeasure system that detects, tracks and jams incoming missiles.

It incorporates advanced missile warning sensors, a compact laser pointer/tracker and a processor in a single pod that can be readily transferred between aircraft to meet rapidly changing mission requirements.

Aviation Africa date

The Aviation Africa trade event will now take place on July 7 and 8 this year at the Kigali Convention Centre in Rwanda. Organiser Times Aerospace said: "We believe and hope that, with the arrival of the vaccine, the Covid-19 virus will have declined sufficiently that people can have the confidence to travel and attend live events by the second half of 2021."

AFRAA appointment

The African Airlines Association (AFRAA) has appointed Raphael Kuuchi as director government, legal and industry affairs in a consulting capacity.

Kuuchi joins AFRAA from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), where he served as the association's special envoy to Africa on aeropolitical affairs for two years and IATA vice president – Africa for four years.

Freighter to Solenta

ACIA Aero Leasing has delivered a further ATR72-212 LCD freighter to Solenta Aviation. The aircraft will be based in Gabon and operate routes for the DHL west Africa network.

Historic parcels

Ethiopian Airlines-DHL and the African Electronic Trade Group have partnered to transport the first parcels in the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Mali Defence Ministry orders second Airbus C295

The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Mali has placed a firm order for an additional Airbus C295 airlifter in the transport configuration.

This second aircraft, to be delivered this year, will supplement the first C295 already in operation since December 2016, which has already accumulated 1,770 flight hours and transported more than 38,000 passengers and 900 tonnes of cargo.

This new order also includes an integrated logistics support package with spare parts for the two aircraft and training for flight crews and mechanics.



On its way: The Republic of Mali wants another Airbus C295. PICTURE: AIRBUS.



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Julie Dickerson

Julie Dickerson
Chief Executive Officer

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Covid-19 is creating a magnetic effect among African airlines, pulling some players closer and pushing others further apart, according to airline CEOs attending the virtual 2020 African Airlines Association (AFRAA) annual general assembly. Victoria Moores reports.

AFRICA'S GREAT RIFT...

Poles apart? Or is Covid dragging the continent together?

«Combler le fossé en Afrique» – Page 12

Among all the African airline cooperations announced in 2020, the standout headline was RwandAir's new equity partnership with Qatar Airways.

"The negotiations are still ongoing; we hope to conclude soon," RwandAir CEO, Yvonne Makolo, told AFRAA delegates. "I still stand by my statements that it's a win-win situation, especially in light of the ongoing pandemic."

Makolo hopes RwandAir will gain from knowledge sharing, joint negotiating power, and a broader network, while Qatar Airways will use its 49% stake in RwandAir to secure further access to the growing African market.

"Once we reset and are ready to grow again, it's a great opportunity," Makolo said. "It's an exciting collaboration that we're all looking forward to."

However, Makolo believes the Covid-19 liquidity crunch may act as a barrier to new equity investments with, or between, African airlines.

Instead, she sees different forms of partnerships emerging, particularly in the short-term.

"Beyond the normal airline alliances, we're seeing more collaboration between airlines,

Continued on Page 12

Yvonne Makolo: "Beyond the normal airline alliances, we're seeing more collaboration between airlines, airports, tourism boards and governments."

PICTURE: CYRIL NDEGEYA.

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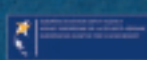


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airports, tourism boards and governments – especially ministries of health – in light of having to put the right protocols in place to jumpstart the industry.”

Makolo's observation rings true for Kenya Airways, as illustrated by the following story shared by Kenya Airways CEO Allan Kilavuka.

“When we restarted in August, after some of the [Covid] restrictions had been lifted, the focus was on rebuilding the network, almost from scratch, and trying to build traffic. We were doing this in collaboration with our government, and also the airports, in conformity with strict protocols. It was, therefore, not easy to have coordination between ourselves and our JV partners, that is Air France and KLM. So, we did this on our own, and so did they,” Kilavuka said.

Kenya Airways has had a close partnership with 7.8% shareholder KLM since 1995, and this cooperation was expanded into a joint venture with Air France-KLM in 2018. The JV covers seven routes between Europe and east

African airlines should team up to seek joint financing.

ALLAN KILAVUKA



PICTURE:
BILLYPIX

SOMMAIRE

COMBLER LE FOSSÉ EN AFRIQUE

La pandémie du Covid-19 suscite un effet d'aimant parmi les compagnies aériennes africaines, rapprochant certaines et éloignant d'autres.

C'est le constat des PDG participant à l'AGA virtuelle 2020 de l'AFRAA.

Un compte-rendu de Victoria Moores.

Le projet de coopération le plus marquant entre les transporteurs en 2020 est celui entre RwandAir et Qatar Airways.

« Les négociations sont toujours en cours et nous espérons conclure bientôt », a affirmé Yvonne Makolo, PDG de RwandAir. « Ce sera un partenariat gagnant-gagnant, en particulier dans le contexte de la pandémie. »

Elle a ajouté que le manque de liquidités lié à la crise du Covid-19 pourrait constituer un obstacle aux nouveaux investissements avec ou entre les compagnies aériennes africaines. D'autres formes de collaboration émergeront néanmoins comme c'est le cas entre les aéroports, les autorités et le secteur touristique concernant les protocoles sanitaires.

La gestion des partenariats et la reconstruction du réseau furent également des priorités pour Kenya Airways. Son PDG, Allan Kilavuka, a souligné « qu'il n'a pas été facile d'avoir une coordination entre nous et avec nos partenaires comme Air France et KLM. L'imprévisibilité du Covid-19 a rendu caduc ce partenariat. Il a dû être suspendu temporairement. » Il espère raviver ce partenariat qui permet une connectivité importante pour Kenya Airways, quand la situation se stabilisera. Entretemps, la pandémie ouvre la voie à de nouvelles collaborations comme la recherche de financement conjoint pour les compagnies africaines.

L'efficacité du réseau fut également un sujet central de l'AGA 2020. L'AFRAA a d'ailleurs lancé « un portail interactif de partage des capacités ».

Pour son secrétaire général, Abdérahmane Berthé, cette nouvelle forme de coopération permettra de restaurer certaines liaisons aériennes, d'augmenter les fréquences quotidiennes et d'ouvrir de nouvelles routes sans investir dans des avions supplémentaires.

Les clients privilégient les vols directs en raison du Covid-19. Il est donc important d'être pragmatique et d'avoir la capacité de répondre à cette nouvelle donne.

Les voyages touristiques ont drastiquement chuté en raison de la crise sanitaire globale. C'est ce qui a poussé la compagnie Air Mauritius, à court de liquidités, à se placer sous administration volontaire le 22 avril dernier. Les vols internationaux ont redémarré vers Paris en octobre dernier (pour les Mauriciens, les résidents et le tourisme de longue durée). Le nombre de passagers reste toutefois limité.

« Il n'y a aucune visibilité, à ce stade, pour notre compagnie aérienne », a déclaré Indradev Raja Buton, officier en charge d'Air Mauritius.

Par ailleurs, le secteur du fret a connu une forte croissance pendant la pandémie. Le PDG d'Astral Aviation, Sanjeev Gadhia s'est dit convaincu que « le fret aura un rôle majeur dans les prochaines années pour chaque compagnie aérienne. Il y a eu très peu de collaboration dans ce secteur en Afrique ». Il a exhorté les PDG présents à « prendre le fret au sérieux » et de l'intégrer comme une priorité à leur stratégie, et au plan de développement de leur flotte et de leur réseau. ■

Africa, as well as nearly 100 onward codeshare flights from Amsterdam Schiphol, Nairobi and Paris Charles de Gaulle. However, the unpredictability of Covid-19 has made the JV schedules unworkable, so the partnership has been put on hold.

“We mutually agreed to suspend this JV for a period of time, to enable us to continue monitoring traffic and wait for better schedule integrity between airlines – and also within the airline,” Kilavuka said.

Like Makolo, Kilavuka sees new ways of working emerging from the pandemic, such as African airlines teaming up to seek joint financing, rather than using traditional debt and equity models.

“If you have two airlines, that will provide a better proposition to someone who is providing funding, as opposed to one [airline]. For example, if Yvonne would be interested in talking to us, and then we approach a financier to fund both organisations as an entity, in some sort of a partnership, it would be more attractive to the financier than me going alone, or Yvonne going alone.”

Makolo backs the idea of joint procurement – she was going to raise it herself, but Kilavuka beat her to it.

“Basically, I think it's a fantastic idea,” she said. “Another one, which again I've discussed a lot with Allan, is how we can collaborate on some of our routes, especially the thinner ones.”

Network efficiency is a topic that AFRAA has focused on. It has launched an ‘interactive capacity-sharing portal’, where airlines can request, or offer, aircraft capacity. AFRAA secretary general, Abdérahmane Berthé, believes this new form of cooperation will help restore some air links, increase daily utilisation and allow airlines to open new routes, without investing in additional aircraft.

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Indradev Buton: “The biggest issue is how long the pandemic is going to last.” PICTURE: AIR MAURITIUS.

This is particularly important, because the coronavirus is making direct flights a higher priority. “Customers now are more interested in point-to-point destinations,” Kilavuka said. “They want to reduce their connections, just to reduce the health risks of connecting at airports. The important thing is pragmatism and the ability to respond to these new trends.”

One such trend has been a flatline in leisure travel. For Air Mauritius, this was the final straw, pushing the cash-strapped carrier into voluntary administration on April 22.

“The raison d’être of our business is leisure,” Air Mauritius officer-in-charge, Indradev Raja Buton, said. “Leisure implies discretionary travel, in terms of budget, so it gets last priority from our customers to come back to Mauritius.”

Helping to fight the Covid war

Nairobi-based Astral Aviation has been working with the World Food Program and World Health Organisation (WHO), moving personal protective equipment (PPE), testing kits and ventilators from China and Europe through Nairobi.

“This is a very large operation, which is ongoing. We have been redistributing a lot of this cargo to various countries in Africa, including Yemen, and, to date, we moved about 600 tonnes of cargo,” said CEO, Sanjeev Gadhia.

Astral has also partnered with DHL, performing flights from Nairobi to Johannesburg, Lusaka, Maputo and Mauritius. “Initially, we started with about three flights per week and this increased to seven per week. It’s been really great because we’ve done more than 180 flights during this whole period of the pandemic and we hope to continue for the next couple of months,” Gadhia continued.

Further work has come from the Africa Medical Supplies Platform (AMSP), which is supported by The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. “In this project, we’ve actually transported PPEs and testing kits to more than 42 countries in Africa,” said Gadhia. ■

● *What a relief – Page 45*

Air Mauritius is looking to streamline its operations, replacing its older Airbus A319s, A340-300s and, possibly, its A330-200s with more efficient A330neo and A350s. But even the most efficient operation needs revenue. Flights to Paris restarted in October, but passenger numbers remain limited.

“The biggest issue is how long the pandemic is

going to last, because, at this stage, there is no future visibility whatsoever for our airline,” Buton said.

Instead of holidaymakers, Air Mauritius’ 3X-weekly Paris flights are mainly carrying cargo – another Covid trend.

While leisure travel has dwindled, cargo has boomed. “We’ve actually seen some fantastic growth in cargo volumes during the pandemic,” revealed Astral Aviation CEO, Sanjeev Gadhia. “The last six months really has been great. I just have no complaints. It’s been great in terms of partnerships and also in terms of relationships.”

On the morning of the AFRAA panel session, Astral chartered a Kenya Airways Boeing 787 to fly to Guangzhou and bring back PPE and testing kits for South Sudan.

“I really believe that the entire role that cargo has played during the pandemic is a wake-up call. And I really believe that cargo has a very important part to play for the next one to three years, at every airline,” Gadhia said.

During the pandemic, Gadhia said he has seen “very little collaboration” between African airlines at a time when it has been needed most.

Over the years, there has been plenty of talk about intra-African collaboration, but very little evidence of it actually happening. Most partnerships are with non-African carriers.

Gadhia said this need will only become more pressing over the next one to two years. It will require good communication, transparency and openness. And a setting aside of differences – and egos.

“They were like two magnets who couldn’t decide whether to attract or repel,” wrote American writer and novelists Jay Asher and Carolyn Mackler in their 2012 novel *The Future of Us*. The characters in the book were able to see 15 years into the future. The more they learn, the more obsessed they become about changing their destiny.

Likewise, Covid has brought the future of African airlines into sharper focus. Will they decide to attract, or repel?

“We are not likely to recover until 2022. So, we have no option but to go for it and collaborate. Otherwise, we will only haemorrhage more, if we continue with this senseless competition,” Kilavuka said. ■



Sanjeev Gadhia: “The entire role that cargo has played during the pandemic is a wake-up call.” PICTURE: BILLYPIX.

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While the impact of Covid-19 has been unprecedented for Africa's air transport hubs, Ali Tounsi, Airports Council International (ACI) Africa's secretary general, remains optimistic about their future. *Chloe Wilson reports.*

Airports gear up to set aviation back on course

Ali Tounsi was interviewed during AFRAA's annual general assembly by Captain Gilbert Kibe, director general of the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA), on how African airports are geared up for the restart and recovery of the air transport industry.

Tounsi highlighted that, although there has been a slight increase in air traffic in the last quarter of 2020 following the reopening of various African borders in October, overall passenger traffic for the year will be down more than 60%, costing the industry around \$2.6 billion.

Acknowledging that airports have a prominent role to play in the recovery of Africa's aviation sector, Tounsi explained that, to help airports reopen and restart their operations safely and efficiently, ACI Africa had issued guidelines back in May. These were based around six key principles:

- Airport preparedness;
- Staff motivation;
- Healthy airport measures;
- Healthy airport experience;
- Financial sustainability; and
- Communication.

"And, in July, ACI launched its airport health accreditation programme to assist airports by assessing new health measures and procedures introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic against global standards," Tounsi added.

"By the beginning of November, 50 airports in Africa had expressed an interest in the programme, with 29 already signed up and airports in Mauritius, Ghana, Tunisia and Rwanda among the first to be accredited."

When asked how airports can sustainably navigate their way through the medium and long-term future, Tounsi said: "Government loans and funding, tax relief, waiving of airport concession fees, and assistance with meeting the costs of public health measures will be essential to ensuring airports remain financially viable."

In a bid to help support stakeholders across Africa's aviation sector, Tounsi also encouraged Africa's air transport hubs to consider deferring or discounting airport charges to support the recovery and development of air traffic.

And he highlighted the need to "realise the liberalisation of civil aviation" through the opening of African skies and the facilitation of free movement of people and goods within the framework of the single African air transport market (SAATM).

While promising news on the vaccine front has provided renewed hope across the industry, Tounsi called

for wider collaboration and cooperation between airports, airlines, and regulators in ensuring a harmonised approach to airport testing protocols.

"This is essential to restore confidence, avoid border closures, and avoid quarantine measures that have slowed the recovery to date," he said.

And, while he agreed that contactless solutions involving biometric and self-service technology will be integral to the future of African airports and reducing the risk of virus transmission, he also conceded that the cost of rolling out new technology in this area will be prohibitive for some airports and, especially, Africa's smaller regional hubs.

Despite the challenges of 2020, Tounsi remains optimistic about the future, thanks to the connectivity airports provide and the vital role they play in contributing to the global economic recovery.

He concluded: "ACI Africa will continue to collaborate on initiatives across the continent that will take the industry a step closer to the smooth restart and sustainable recovery of the air transport industry."

- **The 3Cs needed to rebuild the aviation industry, page 43.**

SOMMAIRE

LA VOIE DE LA GUÉRISON

Interrogé lors de l'AGA virtuelle de l'AFRAA, Ali Tounsi a souligné qu'en raison de la crise, le trafic aérien africain baissera de plus de 60% en 2020 et coûtera environ 2,6 milliards de dollars à l'industrie.

Les aéroports ont donc un rôle majeur à jouer pour relancer le transport aérien en Afrique. ACI a publié une feuille de route pour les aider à redémarrer leurs opérations de manière sûre et efficace. L'organisme a également lancé le programme airport health accreditation (AHA). Début novembre, 50 aéroports avaient signalé leur intérêt pour le programme et 29 s'y étaient inscrits. Quatre aéroports sont aujourd'hui certifiés (un à l'île Maurice, un au Ghana et deux en Tunisie).

Ali Tounsi souligne que « les prêts et financements gouvernementaux, les allègements fiscaux, l'exemption des frais de concession aéroportuaire et les aides pour couvrir les coûts des mesures sanitaires seront essentiels pour garantir la viabilité des aéroports ». Il a également rappelé la nécessité de libéraliser l'espace aérien via le SAATM.

Le secrétaire général d'ACI Afrique a appelé à une plus large coopération et à une approche cohérente. Il reste optimiste car les aéroports constituent un maillon indispensable pour la connectivité et le développement. ■



Ali Tounsi:
Optimistic about
the future.
PICTURE ACI.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is undergoing changing leadership globally and regionally. Alan Peaford reports on developments that will affect Africa.

IATA'S NEW LEADERS FACE A TURBULENT INTRODUCTION

Alexandre De Juniac is a natural diplomat. Throughout the pandemic the chief executive of IATA, the air transport industry's global association, has held regular briefings outlining the trouble that the airline business is in; the negative effect that failing aviation has on national economies; and pointing the finger toward governments in increasingly stiffer diplomatic language in his appeals for support.

By the time of November's annual general assembly (AGA) held, not in Amsterdam as previously planned, but across the internet, De Juniac's patience was wearing increasingly thin. "The aviation industry is in crisis. Why else would the leaders of the industry that brings people together be meeting virtually," he asked?

Speaking to his membership of airline leaders, the industry and the media, he shared the grim statistics:

- International passenger travel is down 89%. Domestic by 43%;
- With just 1.8 billion people expected to travel in 2020, the industry is back at 2003 levels;
- Cargo is the one bright spot. But, with volumes 8% below 2019 it's hardly good news.

"As leaders of the global air transport industry, you know the pain first-hand," he said. "The toll on finances has been devastating. And our thoughts are with the hundreds of thousands of aviation workers who have lost their jobs."

Throughout the pandemic, IATA has claimed the toll could affect 46 million jobs across the aviation-related travel and tourism board. "But this is no time for despair. Today is a call to action. The freedom to fly is essential. And the top priority of your association is restoring it," he said.



However, De Juniac is stepping down and former BA and IAG chief, Willie Walsh, will take control in March. A former pilot, Walsh is well known for his frankness.

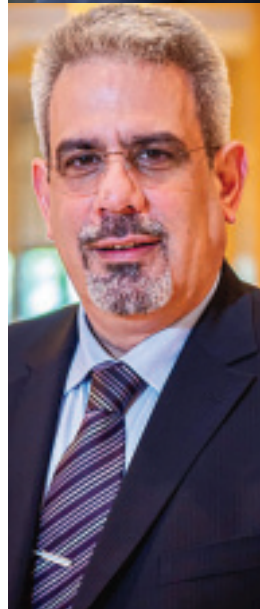
"My style will be different to what has gone before. I, too, am a businessman. I, too, understand how governments operate but I am even more unhappy and more critical of how they get things done or, more importantly, in many cases how they have failed to get things done," Walsh warned the audience

"I have spent more than 40 years in this business. About half of them were at the pointy end, as a pilot, and the other half at the blunt end as a CEO. I know what it takes to succeed. In those 40 years, I have seen first-hand the numerous challenges and significant crises that we have faced and that we have overcome. I have a passion for this industry and a passion for IATA. We need, more than ever, an effective industry body to serve and represent our interests."

There are changes, too, for Africa. It had been widely reported that Muhamad Al Bakri would be leaving his role as vice-president for Africa and the Middle East to take on a



Well known for his frankness: Willie Walsh takes over as chief executive in March.
PICTURE: IATA.



New role: Kamil Al-Awadhi will become the organisation's vice-president for Africa and the Middle East.

PICTURE: KUWAIT AIRWAYS.

new post within IATA. His successor has been named as Kamil Al-Awadhi, who was CEO of Kuwait Airways, a responsibility he held from November 2018 through August 2020.

That capped a 31-year career at the Gulf airline, during which his positions included deputy CEO and chief operating officer. He also held several positions in the areas of safety, security, quality management and enterprise resource planning.

He faces a tough task.

On the sidelines of the AGA, Al Bakri briefed the alarming position in which African airlines find themselves, looking particularly vulnerable due to the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic,

In explaining the region's worse outlook, Al Bakri said African airlines had received little government support during the crisis, and also warned that the "relative lack of cold chain facilities" could delay the distribution of vaccines, meaning Africa is expected to experience a delayed recovery in financial performance.

He said these problems added to the pre-pandemic challenges for the African market, which has proven a stubborn environment for airlines seeking to make inroads and money, amid fragmented connectivity and a complex regulatory system.

"The priority to revive aviation is clear and there is no time to waste," Al-Awadhi said. "We must help governments to re-open borders without quarantine and we need to ensure that the industry is ready to safely scale-up operations and implement the global standards that will keep passenger and crew safe during the pandemic and beyond."



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Keith Mwanalushi *assesses the airline scene in Zambia, looking at latest developments and the challenges of the past year.*



Increased service: Proflight's CRJ-100 started flying daily to Johannesburg in December.
PICTURE: PROFLIGHT.

ZAMBIA BANKS ON A LONG-TERM STRATEGY

Zambia air carriers operating domestic and regional services are busy trying to re-establish as many routes as possible following the reopening of borders, which largely started from October across the continent.

Jim Belemu, CEO at Mahogany Air, said the unprecedented situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic had created significant challenges for the airline. "Soon after the declaration of the coronavirus we saw a drop in passengers and the cancellation of forward bookings," he recalled.

With the suspension of South African Airways' services on the key route to South Africa, Proflight Zambia, with a base in Lusaka, increased its frequency to Johannesburg to a daily service from mid-December.

The airline said following months of steep declines owing to travel restrictions brought about by the pandemic, the increase in frequencies on local and international routes is a sign that the industry may be headed for a recovery.

It also stated that the uptick in travel demand was a positive sign after what had been, and still is, a challenging time for the Zambian aviation industry. However, while signs of recovery abound, the airline is still not relenting on its Covid-19 prevention measures.

Recently established Royal Zambian Airlines, a subsidiary of Royal Air Charters, also launched services on the Lusaka to Johannesburg route in December 2020 with EMB145 equipment.

In the meantime, Mahogany Air has been looking to secure routes around the region and, most importantly, the Johannesburg route too.

Weston Mapani, a Lusaka-based air transport consultant and once chief of operations at the former Zambia Airways,



Weston Mapani: "A lot of Zambian Government money will be lost and the airline is not expected to make any profit in the next 10 years of the agreement."
PICTURE: WESTON MAPANI.

believes there is a direct connection between the demand for air travel and the performance of the local economy.

"There is also the issue of sovereign debt by the Zambian Government. Most of the income is spent on paying debts, but even this is failing. The result is there is no public spending to stimulate the Zambian economy," he explained.

Real gross domestic product (GDP) is projected at negative 4.3% in 2020, the first recession since 1998, according to Mapani. "Disruptions in the supply chains and containment measures have had a severe impact on sectors such as tourism, construction, wholesale and retail trade, as well as manufacturing," he said.

It is anticipated that the ongoing airport developments around the country will have a long-term positive impact on the future development and demand for air travel, not just in Zambia but the entire sub-region.

Just as the pandemic hit Zambia in March, construction progress at the Kenneth Kaunda International Airport (KKIA) in Lusaka had reached 87% completion, with the new passenger terminal at 98% complete.

Local sources say the new airport facility is expected to open for commercial services before Zambia's general election in August 2021.



Just prior to the onset of the pandemic, the Zambian Government had finalised a joint venture with Ethiopian Airlines (ET) for launch of the new Zambia Airways. The project has been in the works for several years. However, among the professional aviation community in Zambia there have been growing calls for caution over the venture.

"The partnership with Ethiopian Airlines was single-sourced, which was not put to the wider world to bid," Mapani said.

He feared that the partnership agreement signed by the Industrial Development Corporation of Zambia and Ethiopian Airlines, which includes a damp lease, where ET will provide aircraft, maintenance, flight dispatch, management, financial control, passenger-handling, catering, and sales, tips in favour of Ethiopian.

"A lot of Zambian Government money will be lost and the airline is not expected to make any profit in the next 10 years of the agreement. However, Ethiopian will make money through all these services it will be providing," he explained.

There are also concerns that the new airline will be confined to a small regional feeder for ET, with no scope for intercontinental growth.

There are currently three local airlines providing air travel services on both domestic and regional operations – Proflight, Mahogany Air, and Royal Zambian Airlines. "If Zambia Airways begins its operations, that will make the small Zambian market overcrowded, coupled with low demand because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The four airlines will compete themselves out of business and the ones with lesser muscles will close. The market right now is only good for one domestic airline and the rest are surplus to the industry requirements," Mapani warned.

In June last year, the Zambian Government approved an eight billion Kwacha (\$439 million) economic stimulus package through a Covid-19 bond. ■

Perfect for safari airline operations: the Cessna Caravan is capable of operating to remote airstrips.

PICTURE: SAFARILINK AVIATION.



Safari tracks a new flightpath

International tourism dropped by 72% between January and October 2020, compared with the same period in 2019, according to Kenya's Tourism Research Institute. It was a body blow for the airlines that focus on supporting the industry.

Edward Njeru reports.

While 2020 was a tremendously tough year for the global aviation industry, small players, like east Africa's safari airlines, suffered badly as many potential tourists cancelled or postponed their visits due to fears of exposure to the virus.

Alex Avedi, chief executive of Safarilink Aviation, one of the leading players in east Africa's safari airline network, said the pandemic came on the back of a successful boom in business.

"In 2019 there was a record for Safarilink in terms of numbers," revealed Avedi. "And it wasn't just us, as most other players benefitted as well. There was a lot of renewed focus on eastern Africa tourism, especially from Europe and North America. And all was going well until March, when Covid set in and changed everything."

Most of the African safari airlines, like Safarilink, were experiencing growth before the pandemic struck. The airlines' fleets were made up, predominantly, of the Cessna Caravan, a versatile aircraft, capable of operating in remote airstrips, which is perfect for safari airline operations.

However, the phenomenal drop in 2020 traveller numbers has seen many airlines now downsizing their fleets.

"It's a gone year for us," Avedi said. "We have done our estimates and, for the next two years, we will not need all our assets. Out of 10 caravans, only four are currently flying.

"We have decided to sell off the oldest aircraft and, so far, we have sold the first two Caravans that we started the company with, as part of our fleet renewal process."

Avedi plans to keep the newer Caravans, fitted with the modern Garmin 1000 avionics, and bring new models into the fleet.

Safarilink is not alone. A number of other east African airlines have sold off some of their aircraft, mainly to the North American market.

"Unfortunately, little support has been shown by the government to help boost the recovery of the safari airline industry, with fees and taxes remaining high, despite the low numbers being experienced," Avedi said.

Kenya's Association of Air Operators has made several petitions to the government calling on all players – governments, aviation authorities and airports – to put

incentives in place to boost the post-Covid recovery of the struggling airlines. "We are hopeful the authorities will act positively on this request," Avedi said.

He believes that the tourism business will rebound once passenger confidence is restored and said it was essential that Safarilink is ready.

"Kenya has been in the safari world since the early 1900s and it's something which is here to stay; I don't see that changing," he said. "But, for us, the only thing that we may think of is how we can diversify our revenue streams to other segments.

"Our bread and butter will always be safari, but our strategic plan is to make that only 50-60% of our revenues and see how we can grow our non-safari streams.

"It could be more domestic routes, it could be cargo, it could be humanitarian and other ancillary revenues. We had a strategic plan in 2019 to leverage our brand and work on that. And then, unfortunately, Covid happened. So, we haven't executed the plan

fully, but we're in the process of doing so."

Certainly, revival of international tourism can't come fast enough for the beleaguered safari carriers or, indeed, east Africa as a whole.

Tourism plays a huge role in Kenya's economy, contributing about 10% of the gross domestic product (GDP).

It is the country's third largest source of foreign exchange and secures about 1.1 million jobs. ■



Alex Avedi. "We have decided to sell off the oldest aircraft."

PICTURE: EDWARD NJERU.

While the rest of the world grapples with the Covid-19 traffic downturn, Uganda Airlines will branch out into long-haul operations in early 2021 after receiving its first Airbus A330-800neo.

Victoria Moores reports.

Water reception:
The first A330 received a special salute as it arrived in Uganda.

PICTURE: UGANDA AIRLINES.

UGANDA AIRLINES IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL

According to Uganda Airlines CEO, Cornwell Muleya, despite the pandemic: “The fleet development plan has remained unchanged under the initial business plan.”

State-owned Uganda Airlines launched operations in August 2019, with an ambitious strategy to serve 20 destinations by the end of 2021, despite a nine-month financing delay.

Even in late 2019 – before the Covid-19 virus hit – Muleya acknowledged that his team had their work cut out. They had to rapidly build a regional feeder network, to create connectivity, before the two A330s were scheduled to arrive in December 2020 and January 2021.

The Ugandan Government had purchased the two new A330s directly from Airbus in 2018 and they did not want to postpone the deliveries, even after the delayed start.

So, Uganda Airlines quickly ramped up its regional fleet to four Bombardier CRJ900s, after introducing the type on to the Ugandan register for the first time, and was serving eight routes by March 2020.

“Until March 2020, we had opened eight routes out of Entebbe as follows: Bujumbura (Burundi), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Juba (South Sudan), Mombasa (Kenya), Kilimanjaro (Tanzania), Mogadishu (Somalia), Nairobi (Kenya) and Zanzibar (Tanzania),” Muleya said.

“We were yet to open other routes under our regional strategy, including Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Goma (all in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Johannesburg (South Africa), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Khartoum (Sudan), Lusaka (Zambia), Harare (Zimbabwe), Lagos (Nigeria) and Accra (Ghana).”

Then the coronavirus struck and the Ugandan Government halted international scheduled flights into and out of Entebbe.

“All our scheduled flights stopped on March 23, 2020. We did not fly scheduled flights again until the airport was [re]opened on October 1, 2020,” Muleya said. “During this lockdown period we were only allowed to operate charter and repatriation flights in and out of Uganda.”

Uganda Airlines gradually began to restore its network in October, but many markets remained closed or heavily restricted. By early December, the carrier had resumed limited frequencies to Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Mogadishu and Juba.

“These restrictions are gradually being lifted and we have now increased flights to Nairobi, as an example,” Muleya said, in early December. “In the next few weeks, we expect to open Johannesburg and Kinshasa.”

Meanwhile, the first Uganda Airlines A330 left the Airbus paint shop on October 16 and was handed over during a delivery ceremony on December 21, arriving into Entebbe on December 22.

“The two A330s are in three-class configuration, with business-class, premium economy and economy-class,” Muleya said. “The two aircraft will be used to connect Uganda to London (UK), Dubai (UAE), Guangzhou (China) and Mumbai (India).”

In earlier interviews, Muleya said Uganda Airlines might also deploy the A330s on longer routes across the African continent.

Moving from the 76-seat CRJ900s to the A330s will be a huge jump for Uganda Airlines, but Muleya is ready for the challenge.



“Our business plan has not changed because, fundamentally, we believe that the markets will return once the pandemic subsides and a vaccine is implemented. We are concentrating on building a strong airline organisation and conserving our cash resources, so that Uganda Airlines can be around when the markets are fully open again.

“The network development plan is the same because Uganda needs the connectivity, within Africa and beyond, for its social and economic development. This requires Uganda Airlines to ensure it completes the set-up processes, including bringing in the aircraft needed to operate the planned network,” Muleya said.

Uganda Airlines’ namesake predecessor collapsed in 2001, while privately owned Air Uganda launched in 2007 and closed its doors in 2014.

Air Uganda flew CRJ200s and Boeing MD87s to Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam, Juba, Kigali (Rwanda), Kilimanjaro, Mogadishu, Mombasa and Nairobi.

Muleya said the A330 delivery is a “big milestone”, after nearly two decades without intercontinental flights. ■



Cornwell Muleya: “Our business plan has not changed because, fundamentally, we believe that the markets will return once the pandemic subsides and a vaccine is implemented.”

PICTURE: BILLYPIX



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Afrijet a de nouveau diversifié ses activités avec la mise en service d'un nouvel ATR72-500 100% cargo. Son directeur général, Marc Gaffajoli, a évoqué avec Vincent Chappard l'adaptabilité de la compagnie durant la crise du Covid-19 et son optimisme d'une reprise du trafic aérien plus tôt en Afrique.

UNE DIVERSIFICATION PROMETTEUSE POUR AFRIJET

Afrijet, la compagnie hybride basée au Gabon, a ajouté une nouvelle corde à son arc en se dotant d'un ATR72-500 100% cargo d'une capacité de huit tonnes.

Selon Marc Gaffajoli, il fallait être capable de se déployer sur des marchés et des secteurs différents car la crise du Covid-19 a remis en question le mix passagers / cargo sur les routes long-courriers. Les fréquences des grandes compagnies desservant l'Afrique se sont drastiquement réduites. De nombreux acteurs du secteur en rupture de solution se sont tournés vers des solutions 100% cargo. De nouveaux réseaux se sont ainsi développés en Afrique, et ceux-ci ont besoin de continuité régionale.

Afrijet démarre donc sur ce marché avec un potentiel pour un second avion. La compagnie pourra répondre à de nombreux besoins aussi bien dans le textile que l'alimentaire. Il y a aussi un grand défi mondial qu'est la distribution du vaccin.

« Nous nous rapprochons des acteurs existants, il y a ce marché de continuité et également un marché régional très vivace notamment sur l'ensemble du golfe de Guinée », affirme Marc Gaffajoli.

Depuis la reprise des vols domestiques le 20 octobre dernier, Afrijet a pu compter sur une activité charter soutenue notamment avec les sociétés pétrolières et gazières.

La compagnie gabonaise envisage deux scénarios pour revenir à son niveau de 2019. Le premier est la remise à niveau de son réseau pour le transport aérien régulier. Compte tenu du marché, cela prendra entre 24 à 30 mois et nécessitera peu de financement. Le second est d'ouvrir des routes plus lointaines. « Nous avons la volonté de croître à travers des partenariats. Nous avons identifié plusieurs compagnies qui souhaitent se développer en Afrique et avoir un point d'appui », ajoute le DG d'Afrijet.

La compagnie présente en effet de nombreux atouts : une capacité de déploiement rapide, une flexibilité de mouvement sans contrainte politique, une certification IOSA et une situation géographique idéale. Le Gabon compte aujourd'hui parmi les dix premiers pays en Afrique



Marc Gaffajoli : « Nous nous rapprochons des acteurs existants. »

PICTURE: AFRIJET

au classement de l'OACI en matière de sécurité aérienne.

Marc Gaffajoli reste positif et confiant pour l'année 2021 et 2022. « Je pense que l'Afrique va redémarrer beaucoup plus tôt que l'Europe ou le Moyen-Orient.

« Les déplacements se font pour des besoins essentiels sur le continent que ce soit pour les activités liées au commerce, aux besoins régaliens, aux obligations familiales. Dès que les solutions de transport sont là, les passagers reprendront le chemin des aéroports. La connectivité régionale fonctionne bien, la reprise sera plutôt en V », dit-il.

Cependant, de nombreuses compagnies sont dans des situations très complexes avec des dettes colossales. Les restrictions de voyages ont également impacté la formation

des pilotes et créé un goulot d'étranglement pour les opérations MRO.

Pour Marc Gaffajoli, les cartes sont rebattues sur le continent. L'Afrique sera davantage confronté à un déficit de l'offre du transport aérien pour 2021 plutôt que de la demande.

SUMMARY

GABON'S AFRIJET DIVERSIFIES INTO CARGO

Afrijet, the Gabon-based hybrid (cargo/passenger) airline, has added a new string to its bow by acquiring a 100% cargo ATR72-500 with an eight-tonne freight capacity.

The Central African airline's CEO, Marc Gaffajoli, explained that the Covid-19 crisis had prompted the company to adapt and he's optimistic that African airlines will bounce back faster than those in Europe and the Middle East.

He said Afrijet needs to operate in changed markets since the pandemic's effects altered the passenger/cargo mix on long-haul routes. "Flight frequencies of the international airlines serving Africa have been drastically

reduced, so many players in the sector turned to 100% cargo that then requires regional connectivity."

Afrijet is entering this market and – with the possibility of a second aircraft – the company expects to meet distribution needs of both textiles and food, while Covid-19 vaccines will also require distribution.

Since the resumption of domestic flights on October 20, Afrijet has counted on increased charter activity, particularly with oil and gas companies.

Gaffajoli says that the future looks brighter and he believes that Africa will soon face a shortfall in air transport supply rather than a lack of demand.

ABERDAIRING TO DO...

While many African aviation businesses were grounded during the pandemic outbreak, one Kenyan airline was taking time out to restructure and revise its strategy for growth. It has now come out of the blocks with action rather than words, as Alan Peaford discovers.



Kenyan wet lease (ACMI) operator, Aberdair Aviation, is to re-fleet following a restructuring, which will extend its multi-air operator's certificate (AOC) business model.

With almost 20 years of operational experience, Aberdair took advantage of the dual disruptions of the Covid pandemic and internal Kenyan issues, to review its business model.

Adrian Wilcox, CEO of the Wilson Airport-headquartered airline, is now outlining plans that will see the company add to its Kenya and Ghana AOCs with a new one for a base in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The airline is also looking to step up its government sector contract work with a move into providing special missions aircraft.



"We are looking to be more focused" said Wilcox.

"We see that we can differentiate ourselves with our capability to provide special mission solutions – primarily intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) – operating unique aircraft types with capabilities that enable us to support sticky contracts on a multiple-year basis, and which have a better yield than other contracts, where the margins have been eroded by virtue of the competition."

Aberdair will be looking at DA42 and DA62 special mission aircraft, he added.

The mainstay business in the resources sector – covering oil and gas and mining demands – as well as humanitarian, will also see additions to the fleet.

Wilcox said the company would be acquiring Dash 8 aircraft to replace its Embraer 120s, which he added, had served Aberdair well.

"We're looking to add our first Dash 8, which will

Aberdair's workhorses: the Embraer 120 Brasilias will make way for De Havilland Dash 8 replacements.

PICTURE: ABERDAIR AVIATION.



Adrian Wilcox: Looking at a new base, new markets and new aircraft.

PICTURE: AEROCOMM.

probably be a -300, within the next three months, with either a -200 or -100 to follow shortly after," he explained.

Aberdair has been restructuring over the past year and, following some strategic decisions, it will be leading its fixed-wing operations through a Ghanaian AOC, with a focus on rotary operations for its Kenyan AOC.

Wilcox said that rotary acquisitions could also follow.

"On the rotary fleet out of Kenya, we started with the H125 / AS350 B3, which is tried-and-tested across Africa and a fantastic format in terms of multi-mission single-engine helicopter operations. Then we will be moving up to the BK117 during the course of 2021, which will give us multi-engine capability and instrument flight rules (IFR) capability," he said

Wilcox said he was excited by the AOC and prospects for the DRC business.



With DRC not having restrictions on foreign ownership, Aberdair is the majority shareholder in the new operation with, what Wilcox describes as "very valuable and productive local partners".

He added: "We see DRC, and our new office in Kinshasa, as being a very good prospective market. It's very large, which sounds silly, but it's a key attribute for a good aviation market, as opposed to a country such as Liberia, where we were before.

"Just the size of the country means that you can build up the hours that you need to make the operation viable.

"There's obviously poor infrastructure. However, we expect that with a new president there is going to come change there, which is going to attract more investment in infrastructure and some big hydro-electric power projects.

"Finally, we see that there's going to be more mining activity and the UN has a significant presence there as well."

Wilcox is optimistic that the 'time-out' in 2020 has helped his company get into shape for the next stage of growth.

"Because of this restructuring, we're going to keep our powder dry and make sure our batteries are fully recharged ready for a big push in 2021, both in terms of our traditional clients, and the 'last mile' logistics that are going to be required as and when the coronavirus vaccine is rolled out across Africa," Wilcox said.

"With our multi-AOC footprint, we see ourselves as being better positioned to be able to support that. So we're working with established logistical partners to start understanding what their requirements are going to be, so that we can put that in place for when the demand comes.

"We don't necessarily think it's going to be as early as some people are suggesting, but definitely during the course of the year we're going to be ready to ramp up our airborne last-mile logistical capabilities to be able to support needs as required."

HISTORY MADE AT 6X VIRTUAL ROLL OUT

Dassault Aviation unveiled its newest business jet – the ultra-wide-body Falcon 6X – in Bordeaux-Mérignac on December 8, writes Anuradha Deenapanray.

History was made when, because of the global pandemic, Dassault performed its first ever virtual aircraft roll-out.

Whatever the circumstances, nothing could dampen the spirits of the company's chairman and CEO, Eric Trappier.

"The Falcon 6X is not just an aircraft; it is an entirely new flight experience," he enthused. "It represents a major step forward for large-cabin business jet operators."



"It's award-winning cabin is the tallest and widest in business aviation and provides levels of spaciousness, comfort, productivity and safety that will set a new benchmark in the long-range segment."

With a 5,500nm (10,186km) range and top speed of Mach .90, the aircraft can connect passengers to major business centres far and wide – Paris to Tokyo, Los Angeles to Moscow or Beijing to San Francisco.

The 6X has many military-inspired technologies for enhanced performance and safety. Its digital flight control system commands all flight control surfaces automatically, ensuring efficiency during the entire journey.

It also features the business jet world's first combined vision system – the Falcon Eye –



Julian Burrell: "We are also in talks to add other African aircraft."

PICTURE: VERTIS AVIATION.



Bullish: Eric Trappier at the Falcon 6X virtual roll-out.

PICTURE: DASSAULT AVIATION
V ALMANSA.

which gives better situational awareness during all weather conditions. This adds a significant margin of safety during airport operations, especially at challenging airfields.

Powered by Pratt & Whitney Canada PW 812 D engines, the 6X sets new standards in performance, fuel efficiency and sustainability, according to the company. It has an advanced low-noise design, which facilitates maintenance

and, therefore, less aircraft downtime.

The manufacturer has completed ground and flight tests of the engine. Maria Della Posta, president Pratt & Whitney Canada said: "We feel very confident that all expectations will be met."

The rollout will be followed by the ground-test programme and the extensive systems checks before the maiden flight scheduled for early 2021, and an entry into service in 2022. ■

VERTIS ADDS 604 JET TO AFRICAN MARKET

Vertis Aviation, the Switzerland-headquartered boutique jet consultancy, continues to make its mark in Africa, writes *Marcelle Nethersole*.

Vertis has revealed that a new jet is being added to the company's African fleet.

In early December, chairman Julian Burrell said: "We will be adding a Challenger 604 to the Vertis charter market programme (VCMP) before the end of 2020."

"Africa remains an important market for us and the aircraft will be based in west Africa, where demand is growing for charter."

"We're also in talks to add other African aircraft to the VCMP as we anticipate, when we reach the new normal [after the coronavirus pandemic], that demand will continue to grow for good quality aircraft to fly intra- and inter-continental trips."



Burrell added that, pre-coronavirus, the amount of flights the company was chartering in Africa had been 'busy' and that there was still a demand, even though the pandemic has slowed business down.

"There are still movements within Africa as there are varying levels of lockdown, which makes travelling possible," said Burrell.

"With regards to international business aviation flights, Vertis is handling a good proportion of them."

The company's Africa fleet includes a Bombardier Challenger 350, and a Bombardier Global 6000, based in South Africa. Its G450 also operates flights into Africa.

The company, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in October, also added an Embraer ERJ145 in May last year that is based in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

"The privately owned jet is strategically positioned to serve increasing demand from customers requiring group passenger transportation or cargo lift within the western and sub-Saharan African regions," said Burrell.

"The African commercial network is renowned for its inability to connect major economic hubs easily and conveniently. This has driven the rise of business aviation on the continent and, as economies continue to expand, the need for access to aircraft that can move goods and people from point-to-point, rather than via convoluted routes, is imperative."

"The chaos being caused to the commercial airline industry by the Covid-19 pandemic is exacerbating the limited nature of these services. We are filling a gap by providing access to an aircraft with the capabilities and reliability of the ERJ145." ■

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Prague-based Aero Vodochody recently received three Nigerian Air Force (NAF) L-39ZAs for overhaul and upgrade. Normally, this would have been straightforward but, as Alan Warnes explains, nothing is simple when Covid-19 is involved.



Going, going: One of the three L-39ZAs disappears into the bowels of the Antonov An-124 at Kano Airbase.

PICTURE: AERO VODOCHODY.

Albatross Czechs in...eventually

The NAF operates the L-39ZA Albatross jet trainer in combat, where it is used for reconnaissance and ground attacks, and for training pilots at the 403rd Flying Training School at Kano.

Three of its ageing fleet are now undergoing rework in the Aero Vodochody maintenance repair and overhaul facility. Once that's completed, they will then be upgraded with the Genesys IDU 680 electronic flight instrument system (EFIS).

The work is expected to last about a year.

However, getting the aircraft out of Nigeria and into Czechia took quite some doing.

The Czech-built Albatrosses have been in NAF service for more than 30 years and, until recently, most of them have been grounded.



The NAF originally took delivery of 24 L-39ZAs in 1986/87 and, in 1990, had planned to buy another 27 of the type. However, these were never delivered and, instead, found their way to Algeria.

Over the years, Aero Vodochody has been involved in keeping as many of the aircraft as possible in action.

In 2012, for example, the company reactivated two L-39ZAs and, in 2016, it overhauled 12 VS-1 BRI ejection seats for the aircraft.

In 2019, Aero completed the repairs and extended the life of another three L-39ZAs at Kano Airbase. On December 4 that year, the NAF tweeted an image of two of the type that Aero had returned to service, with factory pilot, Vladimír Továrek, present to carry out the acceptance flights. The

third is also believed to be completed, which would make it six that are now back in the air.

The L-39ZAs are playing a part in the fight against Boko Haram and other Islamic militias in Nigeria's north, with each aircraft flying around 500 hours in a year.

Putting that into perspective, Aero Vodochody spokesperson, Tereza Vrablov, said: "The most demanding customers usually fly around 350 hours annually."

In late-2019, the NAF commander, Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar, told me: "Revitalising our fleets of aircraft is important. Working with Aero Vodochody, we have returned three L-39ZAs to service and they are now doing a great job against the BHT terrorists.

"We have also contracted the company to return three more L-39ZAs and upgrade the old analogue cockpit with a new Genesys system. My desire is to upgrade all six – with the additional three coming out of the 2021 budget.

"I am also pleased we had so many NAF personnel involved in returning the aircraft to the air."

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, in early-July 2020 Aero set about getting these three L-39ZAs from Kano Airbase to the Czech Republic.



Vrablov, who went to Nigeria with the engineers to pick up the aircraft, explained: "It wasn't easy to organise a transport aircraft to airfreight the three aircraft when much of the world was not travelling because of Covid-19. The coronavirus was really getting a grip in Nigeria at that time but, after long negotiations, it eventually happened."

Engineers had also travelled to Kano beforehand, to disassemble the aircraft and prepare them for the journey back. However, commercial flights then stopped from Kano and, later, from the capital, Abuja.

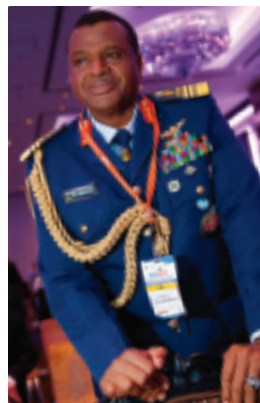
Vrablov continued: "There was no way we could get them home, but we finally resolved this when we organised an Antonov An-124 for transportation."

In the end, the huge Ukrainian-built cargo transporter also took on a humanitarian dimension. In cooperation with the ministry of foreign affairs, the four-engine strategic airlifter flew from Pardubice International Airport to Nigeria, carrying 10 medical beds from Czech company, Linet, and other medical supplies.

Once at Kano, it took two days to load the L-39ZAs, which by now had had their fuselages crated along with their wings, tails and horizontal stabilisers, on to the Antonov 124.

The giant freighter then flew back to Pardubice, where the crates were offloaded and transported by road for the hour-long journey to Aero Vodochody.

Once the work is complete, the digital cockpit will provide the NAF pilots with a smoother transition to the new Pakistan Aeronautical Complex JF-17 Thunders that are expected to be delivered this year.



Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar: "Revitalising our fleets of aircraft is important."

PICTURE: BILLYPIX.

Unmanned air vehicles (UAVs) are becoming a key enabler for African military and security forces in combatting terrorism and armed militancy. The expansion in UAV fleets across the continent has not escaped the Sabel, where the Niger National Guard (GNN) is growing its own drone component for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) duties. Erwan de Cherisey reports.

DRONES OVER THE DESERT



Small success: The Niger National Guard now operates three Delair DT26M small UAVs with a fourth on order.

PICTURE: DELAIR.

The GNN is a military force tasked with internal security, judicial police duties, intelligence gathering, patrolling, and riot control, with a focus on rural areas, although it can also be deployed in urban settings for public order support.

The GNN is intended to provide a visible government presence in the vast expanses of the Nigerien hinterland, where no other security forces operate, reach out to the local population, and serve as first responder in case of criminal activity.

Its experience in operating across the length and breadth of the Niger desert, notably along the border with Mali, and its keen understanding of local populations in these areas have turned it into a key asset in the ongoing fight against terrorist threats.

□□□□□

In light of its critical intelligence-gathering role, and to further strengthen its surveillance capabilities, the GNN was singled out to be provided with a UAV capability under a bilateral agreement between France's Directorate for Security and Defence Cooperation (DCSD) and the Niger Government.

In 2018, French UAV manufacturer, Delair, was selected by the DCSD to provide its DT26M UAV for the project, together with support equipment.

The DT26M is a mini UAV with an endurance of up to 170 minutes and a range of 50km. It can carry a payload of

up to 3kg, which for the GNN is an InPixal ASIO-155HD, combining a high-definition video camera with an infrared imager in a two-axis gyro-stabilised gimbal mount.

As one Delair executive outlined, the operational environment and context where the UAVs would be used were carefully assessed by the DCSD before a selection was made. The reliability of the DT26M was a key strongpoint which resulted in its selection.

He added: "The idea with the DT26M is for it to be the Toyota of drones – rugged, simple and efficient."

Delair was also already registered as a fixed-wing UAV supplier of the Public Procurement Groups Union (UGAP), a centralised French Government procurement platform, which made it much easier to expedite procurement compared to other companies.

□□□□□

The initial contract signed with the DCSD covered two UAVs and a control station, as well as training for operators and maintenance personnel. These were selected by the GNN from its own ranks on the basis of their technical culture and informatics knowledge.

Training was carried out throughout the first half of 2019, both in France and in Niger.

In November 2019, the two aircraft were formally handed over to the GNN, thus allowing the activation of its UAV unit.

That same year, a maintenance and sustainment contract was ratified by the DCSD to ensure long-term support of the UAV fleet. Under this agreement, Delair technical teams travel to Niger every six months to provide training refreshers, inspect the UAVs and undertake preventative maintenance on them.

Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, the initial schedule had to be altered and, after a first visit in early 2020, a second was conducted in November, albeit with a longer duration to compensate for the delays.

The GNN and DCSD have both been satisfied with the DT26M's performance, as well as with Delair's support.

The Delair executive noted that particular emphasis was placed on sustainment, given the harsh operating environment.

Constant interactions with the customer take place, including regular conference calls to ensure that any issues can be resolved as quickly as possible.

This strong track record led to a follow-on order for a third aircraft in 2019. This was delivered in June 2020. Then in September, a contract for a fourth aircraft was formalised.



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HERCULEAN TASK FOR MARSHALL IN CAMEROON

The five-year contract for the UK's Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group to maintain the Cameroon Air Force's Lockheed Martin C-130H tactical transport aircraft has now been ratified.

Cameroon operates a pair of standard C-130H aircraft, delivered in 1977, and a single stretched C-130H-30. These serve the 221 Escadrille de Transport, part of the 22ème Escadron Aérien based at Douala Airport.

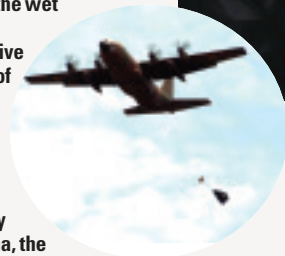
One of Marshall's first tasks may be to support the return to service of the aircraft damaged when it suffered a runway excursion after landing at Maroua-Salak Airport, Cameroon, on August 2.

The aircraft was unable to stop on the wet runway and ran off the end.

There were no injuries among the five crew and 91 passengers – personnel of the Cameroon defence forces deployed with the multinational joint taskforce supporting the Lake Chad Basin Commission. Photographs suggest that damage was light.

The support contract was signed by Brigadier General Jean-Calvin Momha, the Cameroon Air Force chief of air staff, and Marshall ADG sales director, Matthew Harvey, in the Cameroon capital Yaoundé.

Momha said: "Marshall ADG has an excellent reputation within the industry for providing world-class support on the C-130 and our evaluation process confirmed that their solution delivered the best value for money. We look forward to developing a solid long-term relationship with Marshall and seeing the



Preparing for take-off: Pre-flight checks on board a Cameroon Hercules. Left: A Cameroon Air Force C-130 drops a bundle during a training exercise.

PICTURES: USAF MASTER SGT STAN PARKER.

benefits that their experience will bring to our C-130 operations.

"The Cameroon Air Force demands the very highest standards of support across all its fleets and the C-130 provides critical capability to our important airlift missions."

Marshall has a long and proud history of supporting the Hercules, and for modifying and upgrading the type. ■

TÂCHE HERCULÉENNE

Le contrat de cinq ans pour la maintenance de l'avion de transport Lockheed Martin C-130H de l'armée de l'air camerounaise a été ratifié avec le groupe britannique Marshall Aerospace and Defence.

Le contrat a été signé par le général de brigade aérienne Jean-Calvin Momha et le directeur des ventes de Marshall ADG, Matthew Harvey.

Le Cameroun opère deux C-130H standard livrés en 1977 et une version allongée du C-130H-30. Ceux-ci desservent la 221ème Escadrille de Transport, faisant partie du 22ème Escadron Aérien basé à l'aéroport de Douala.

L'une des premières tâches du groupe Marshall Aerospace and Defence serait d'apporter son support à la remise en service de l'avion endommagé lors d'une sortie de piste après son atterrissage à l'aéroport de Maroua-Salak, le 2 août dernier. ■

SENEGAL SET FOR FIRST CN23MPA

Senegal's first CN235 maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) has been ceremonially rolled out.

Indonesian Aerospace (PT Dirgantara Indonesia) showed off what it described as the second of two CN-235 aircraft for the Senegalese Air Force at Bandung/Husein Sastranegara Internal Airport.

Senegal already has two transport versions of the CN235 in its inventory, a CN235-220AT and a CN235-220M – both operated by the Escadre de Transport at Dakar/Yoff.

One of these is a second-hand ex-commercial airliner model originally flown by Indonesia's Merpati Nusantara Airlines and later converted to military configuration. Another ex-airliner was transferred to Guinea.

□□□□□

It seems that two MPA versions will now also be delivered – the newly rolled-out CN235-220MPA, still wearing the Indonesian test registration AX-2348 and expected to become 6W-TTD, and a further machine, expected to become 6W-TTE.

This reflects the ever-growing piracy threat in the Gulf of Guinea, which countries like Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria are now having to tackle.

The CN235 was the product of a joint venture between Construcciones Aeronáuticas SA (CASA) of Spain and PT Dirgantara Indonesia, formerly known as IPTN. The two companies formed Airtech International



Fittings: The first CN235MPA for Senegal is fitted with underbelly search radar and an under-nose EO/IR turret.

PICTURE: ABDIEL IR.

to manage the programme and to jointly develop the original Series 10 and Series 100/110 versions.

Later versions were developed independently – so that there are competing Spanish and Indonesian MPA variants, with CASA offering the CN235MP Persuader and IPTN offering the CN235MPA.

The Spanish CN235MP Persuader featured a belly-mounted radar, while the Indonesian MPA version originally had a nose-mounted search radar in an extended nose radome, and an antenna fairing, probably serving an electronic support measures (ESM) system, on top of the cockpit.

The new Senegalese CN235MPA has a configuration similar to the Persuader, however.

All MP and MPA variants have an electro-optical/infrared sensor turret under the nose, and are offered with a number of radar options, including the Thales OceanMaster or Searchmaster and the Telephonics APS-143C(V)3. ■

SOMMAIRE

CN23MPA POUR LE SÉNÉGAL

Le premier avion de patrouille maritime CN235 (MPA) du Sénégal a été officiellement déployé.

Le Sénégal a déjà deux versions de transport du CN235, un CN235-220AT et un CN235-220M opérés par l'Escadre de Transport à Dakar/Yoff.

L'un d'entre eux est un ancien modèle d'avion de ligne commercial d'occasion utilisé à l'origine par Merpati Nusantara Airlines de l'Indonésie, puis converti en configuration militaire. Un autre a été transféré en Guinée.

Il semble que deux versions MPA seront désormais livrées. Cela reflète la menace de piraterie croissante dans le golfe de Guinée, à laquelle doivent faire face les pays comme le Sénégal, la Côte d'Ivoire, le Ghana et le Nigéria. ■

FRANCE OFFERS LIGHT RELIEF TO COMBAT TERROR

The French Government is to assist west African nations in the fight against Jihadist insurgents and terrorists by supplying more Tétrás CS and CSM light intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft.

The CSM is intended specifically for military users

The Humbert Tétrás (Grouse) is a two-seat ultralight of similar configuration to the Piper Cub – a high-winged, single-engine taildragger.

The aircraft is available as a kit for home-building, or as a complete aircraft, and it has been in production by Humbert Aviation of Ramonchamp since 1994.

France's move is aimed at boosting the surveillance capabilities of Benin and Burkina Faso, countering the spread of Islamist operations in the border zone between the two countries and also in the region that borders Benin and Niger.

The original Tétrás, which first flew during 1992, was powered by a 72hp Humbert-Volkswagen HW 2000, but production versions use an 80hp Rotax 912 UL or a 100hp Rotax 912 ULS.

The Tétrás CS and CSM now being marketed for ISR use are powered by the 100hp engine, and have a shorter span wing. Tétrás CSL and CSLM versions, with undercarriage fairings, are also available.

The Armée de l'Air Cameroun received nine Humbert Tétrás BSM/CSM aircraft from about December 2000, eight of which remain in use.

The Armée de l'Air Malgache received an initial example of the Tétrás B in about 2004, and two more in 2009 and 2013. At least one remains in service.

The Escadrille Nationale de Niger received eight Tétrás



Medical drop: Mali Air Force Tétrás drop a box of medical supplies during a training exercise at the Mopti Airfield in Sevaré.

PICTURE: US ARMY SPC KIMBERLY TRUMBULL.

CSM surveillance aircraft from France. Three are currently in operational service.

Three Tétrás CSL aircraft were donated to the Force Aérienne de Burkina Faso by France in October 2012 for surveillance and reconnaissance missions.

The Force Aérienne de Guinée received a pair of CSLM aircraft in about 2013, and three further Tétrás CSMs in May 2015. One was lost on October 5 2016.

The Force Aérienne de la République du Mali received 13 Humbert Tétrás CS aircraft from 2014, and six remain in service. ■

SOMMAIRE

AVIONS LÉGERS...

Le gouvernement français va aider les pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest dans la lutte contre les insurgés et terroristes djihadistes en fournissant davantage d'avions légers (notamment le Tétrás CS et CSM) dédiés à la surveillance et la reconnaissance.

La version CSM est dédiée spécifiquement à des déploiements militaires.

□ □ □ □ □

Le Tétrás (Grouse) est un avion ultra léger à deux places de configuration similaire au Piper Cub, un monomoteur à ailes hautes.

L'avion est fabriqué par Humbert Aviation à Ramonchamp depuis 1994.

Cette décision de la France vise à renforcer les capacités de surveillance du Bénin et du Burkina Faso pour contrecarrer la propagation des opérations islamistes dans la zone frontalière entre les deux pays et également dans la région frontalière du Bénin et du Niger. ■



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*The search for an aircraft to replace the ubiquitous Douglas DC-3/C-47 Dakota has become something of a quest. The Dakota's mix of rugged simplicity, ability to operate from short, primitive, grass or dirt airstrips, 1,200nm range, 21-32 seat capacity, and close to six-tonne payload, made it the aircraft of choice in the developing world. However, as **Jon Lake** reports, a rival is rapidly building its reputation.*

See the difference: VIP variants of the Mi-17 (and some ex-Aeroflot aircraft) have distinctive rectangular cabin windows, like this Egyptian aircraft.

PICTURE: US DOD SERGEANT JOSE M. HERNANDEZ.



HIP REPLACEMENT?

Russia's Mil Mi-17 helicopter, known to NATO as the 'Hip-H', carries 24 troops or a four-tonne payload, and is winning a formidable reputation for rugged dependability.

As a result, it is rapidly becoming Africa's most widely used utility workhorse – operating with at least 28 of the continent's air forces, and with numbers in service increasing steadily.

A clear indication of its superiority came in 2018, when a report from the lead inspector general to the US Congress on Operation Freedom's Sentinel – the US Government's official name for the continuation of the global war on terrorism – outlined concerns with the ongoing replacement of the Afghan Air Force's Mi-17s with Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawks.

The US aircraft were acknowledged to be less capable and harder to maintain than the Russian-made helicopters – unable to operate at the same high elevations, and often requiring two Black Hawks to carry the load of a single Mi-17.

Current African military operators of the Mi-17 include the air forces of Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Republic



of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Libya, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The type is also used by parapublic, law enforcement and other government operators in Angola (Ministerio de Administracion Territorial), Burkina Faso (government flight), Equatorial Guinea, Kenya (Kenya Police) Libya (Air Ambulance Service), and Sudan (Police Air Wing).

Former operators include Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Somalia.

The type has been used in action during the Sierra Leone Civil War, ferrying

ammunition and other supplies to government troops, and also in the Angolan Civil War and the more recent Libyan Civil War.

The Mi-17 is a derivative of the Mi-8 – its original Soviet armed forces designation was Mi-8MT, with the Mi-17 designation initially reserved for civil and export sub variants.

The basic TV2-powered Mi-8 first flew in 1961, and entered service in 1967. The up-engine Mi-17 followed some years later, flying in 1975 and entering service in 1977.

Compared to the basic Mi-8, the Mi-17 was fitted with more powerful Klimov TV3-117MT engines originally developed for the navalised Mi-14, with uprated rotors and transmission, and a strengthened fuselage to allow the carriage of heavier loads.

The new powerplant and dynamics system resulted in the tail rotor being repositioned from the starboard side of the tail boom to the port – the main recognition feature for the new variant. Dust filters were also fitted in front of the engine intakes.

Some like it hot: This Kenyan Mi-171E – a dedicated hot-and-high – variant combines the original rounded nose and new full-width loading ramp.

PICTURE: ALAN WILSON

Continued
on Page 34

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HELICOPTERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

The helicopter was designed by Mikhail Mil, the head of the Mil Moscow Helicopter Plant.

Since Mil merged with Kamov and Rostvertol to form Russian Helicopters in 2006, the type has been built by two factories – the Kazan Helicopter Plant in the Republic of Tatarstan, and the Ulan-Ude Aviation Plant in the Republic of Buryatia.

Kazan initially concentrated on the production of military versions of the Mi-17, but both factories have now produced variants for military customers, while other factories and plants have reworked former Soviet and Russian military variants for new customers, sometimes using former specialised electronic warfare and command post variants (and even ex-Aeroflot aircraft) as the basis of military transport or medevac helicopters.

A bewildering array of sub-variants of the Mi-17 have been produced, with different engines, avionics, nose radar sets, and door configurations, and different engine air intake filters. Some aircraft have a new, lower drag nose shape, while others are still being delivered with the blunter, more heavily glazed original Mi-8 nose shape. Some aircraft retain the bulged rear clamshell doors of the Mi-8, while others have a drop-down rear loading ramp, allowing them to load a small sport utility-type vehicle (SUV).



The Mi-17 can carry a range of armament on optional outrigger-type pylons, including bombs, gun and rocket pods, and missiles, while trainable machine guns can be mounted in doors and windows.

For improved hot-and-high performance, Mi-17 variants have been offered with 2,070shp Isotov TV3-117VM engines or full authority digital engine control (FADEC)-equipped Klimov VK-2500 powerplants.

Identical configurations produced by the two factories have sometimes used different designations, while different versions have sometimes shared the same designation, making the classification and identification of different Mi-17 sub-types extremely problematic.

The Kazan-built Mi-17V-5 has been delivered to Ghana and Uganda with the newer, pointed nose and a full-width cargo ramp, while Senegal's Mi-17V-5s have the older, glazed and rounded nose and a cargo ramp.

Similarly, the Mi-171Sh is an export version of the Ulan-Ude's Mi-8AMTSh.



Latest model: The Mi-171A2 is being aggressively marketed to potential customers in Africa.

PICTURE: RUSSIAN HELICOPTERS.

But, while Algeria's aircraft have a rounded nose, and clamshell doors, Chad's have the pointed nose and a full-width cargo ramp.

Algeria has taken delivery of a variety of Mi-17 sub-variants, some of which have been further upgraded in country to include a South African Denel Argus opto-electronic targeting system and Kentron ZT35 tube-launched anti-tank guided missiles.

Algeria also operates some examples of the Mi-171Sh2, an upgraded version of Mi-171Sh with new avionics, and engines, an under-nose optronic ball turret, the 'President-S' active and passive protection

system, B8W20A rocket pods, and up to eight 9M120 'Ataka' missiles. This all turns the Mi-17 into a heavily armed and sophisticated gunship.

The Mi-172 is one of the latest variants of the Mi-17, and is a civilian passenger version manufactured at the Kazan plant, based on the Mi-8MTV-3. Those delivered to the Kenya Police feature the round nose and clamshell doors, while those for Equatorial Guinea have the newer pointed nose.

The Mi-171A2 is now being marketed to a number of potential African customers. The new variant features an integrated avionics suite developed by Ulyanovsk Flight Instrument Design Bureau, allowing a two-man flight deck with no flight engineer.

The aircraft has composite blades on the main rotor and the X-shaped tail rotor, with an upgraded swashplate and a new main rotor hub. It is powered by 2,400hp Klimov VK-2500PS-03 turboshaft engines.



Back in the air: One of a pair of Burkina Faso Air Force Mi-17s overhauled by LOM Praha. This example has been modernised and fitted with a Nitesun searchlight.

PICTURE: ALAN WARNES

BURKINA FASO MI-17S RETURNED TO SERVICE

After 18 months of work, Prague-based LOM Praha returned two Mi-17s back to the Burkina Faso Air Force (BFAF) in late November, writes Alan Warnes.

But for the consequences of Covid-19, their stay would have been much shorter.

LOM Praha, based at Kbely Airfield, is one of only a handful of Mil helicopter maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) – as well as modernisation – facilities in Europe.

The two BFAF Mi-17s were airfreighted by Ilyushin Il-76 from Base Aérienne (BA) 511 at Ouagadougou to Pardubice Airport in the Czech Republic on March 15, 2019. They were subsequently transported by road to the factory.

They were then both stripped down and parts were overhauled, along with the fuselage and all the dynamic elements, including the TV3-117MT engines and the gearboxes, that were worked on at the company's Malesich facility.

The work has extended the helicopter's life cycle by another four years [from 35 to 39 years], to provide eight years of further flying.

The first example, BF-9202, flew again on September 9 after being towed out of LOM Praha's modernisation and upgrade hangar. A large scale upgrade of the helicopter's communications and navigation systems was carried out, with the installation of two Garmin 750 touch-control systems.

The second aircraft, BF-9001, was seen flying on September 18 with a Nitesun searchlight fitted, although there has been no modernisation of the aircraft's systems.

The official handover of the helicopters took place on September 21, with representatives from Burkina Faso including the Chief of Air Staff, Kounsouma Palenfo, and the Ambassador of Burkina Faso in Vienna, His Excellency Dieudonné Kéré.

After arrival in Ouagadougou, LOM technicians assembled the Mi-17 helicopters. They are now tasked to support the internal security needs of Burkina Faso.

Over the past couple of years the African state has been subjected to terrorist attacks and the rise of criminal gangs.

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HELICOPTERS



THE GOLDEN HIND

It is almost 50 years since the Mil Mi-24 assault helicopter entered service. Today, as David Oliver reports, the Hind is being used in both the Libyan civil war and by Algeria against jihadist militants.

Libya has a long history of using the Hind and it is still much in action today.

During the 2011 Libyan Civil War, a number of Hinds were captured by the rebels, who formed the Free Libyan Air Force, and then both sides used the aircraft to attack enemy positions.

During the battle for Benina Airport in February 2011, one Mi-35 was destroyed on the ground and another was captured by the rebels.

Two Mi-35s, operating for the pro-Gaddafi Libyan Air Force, were destroyed on the ground in March 2011 by French aircraft enforcing the no-fly zone during Operation Unified Protector.

One Free Libyan Air Force Mi-25D violated the no-fly-zone in April 2011 to strike loyalist positions in Ajdabiya. It was shot down by ground forces.

After the overthrow and death of Gaddafi, the Libyan National Army and

Air Force were disbanded but they re-established in 2012. However, by 2015, Libya's military had split into two factions, the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) and the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA).

The country slid into a second civil war with the two factions operating their own emasculated air forces with, between them, no more than 30 serviceable aircraft, including a few Hinds. These aircraft are largely flown and maintained by mercenaries.

Three Mi-24Ps were bought by the UAE from Belarus and delivered to the LNA at Marj in April 2015.

In April 2019, the eastern-based LNA attacked the stronghold of the internationally recognised GNA in Tripoli. However, that action failed.

Then, in April 2020, an LNA Mil Mi-35 was shot down near Misrata and another Mi-35 was captured when GNA forces

Under fire: Libyan Air Force Mi-25 854 was captured by the Free Libyan Air Force and shot down by pro-Gaddafi forces in April 2011.

PICTURE: ROB SCHLEIFFERT.

took the LNA's strategic al-Watiya Air Base in May.

In September 2020, an LNA MiG-29 was shot down by GNA forces and its Russian mercenary pilot was rescued by an LNA Mi-24 Hind. A few days later, another LNA Mi-24 crashed near Al-Jufrah Air Base, killing four Russian mercenaries on board.

Meanwhile, Algeria took delivery of 20 Mi-25s – the export version of the Mi-24D – in 1980, plus a similar number of Mi-24Vs, which operated against various Islamist rebel groups during the 1991 to 2002 civil war.

Some 30 were extensively upgraded to SuperHind Mk.IIIIs by South African company, ATE, now part of Paramount Group. They were equipped with modern avionics, countermeasures and electro-optical/infrared (EO/IR) sensor systems.

Recently, they have been in action against the Nusrat al-Islam fighters affiliated to Al-Qaeda in Mali. ■

STATE AIRCRAFT TO BE MANAGED BY KENYA AIR FORCE

Plans have been announced to hand over the management of state-owned aircraft to the Kenya Air Force (KAF), writes *Jon Lake*.

An executive order from president Uhuru Kenyatta will put the changes into effect.

Under the new arrangements, all aircraft and helicopters owned by the Kenya Police, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Kenya Forest Service (KFS), KenGen, Kenya Power, Ketraco and other state agencies, will be managed by KAF personnel.

The growing involvement of the Kenyan military in civilian affairs reflects a belief that military discipline will be helpful in these agencies – not least in combatting corruption – and that interagency

cooperation, especially with the National Intelligence Service, will be facilitated.

The plans were announced by KAF commander, Major General Francis Ogolla, and Inspector General of Police, Hilary Mutyamba, during a visit to the National Police Service (NPS) air wing's base at Nairobi's Wilson Airport.

The air wing operates seven fixed-wing Cessnas of various types, and about 10 helicopters, including Mil Mi-17s, AgustaWestland AW139s, Bell JetRangers, and a single AW119 Koala. Its 150 personnel include 21 pilots and 39 trainee pilots.

The KAF will also take responsibility for the Wilson Airport-based KWS Airwing, which also has forward

bases in Meru, Tsavo West National Park, and Mweiga in the Aberdare National Park.

The KWS Air Wing has more than 40 pilots, and operates about 12 fixed-wing aircraft, augmented by a Bell 206 and a Bell 407.

■ Meanwhile, in Botswana, the Botswana Police Service has received a batch of the three Enstrom 480B training helicopters from Safomar Aviation.

The aircraft will be used to ease the burden on the service's frontline helicopters, but will be equipped with state-of-the-art Trakka Systems day/night cameras and searchlights, comprehensive navigation and communications equipment, and light emergency medical systems kit. ■

LEONARDO BUYS PAS TO BOOST SERVICE OFFER

Helicopter manufacturer, Leonardo, has bought South Africa's Precision Aviation Services (PAS) as it increases support for its aircraft in the continent, writes **Alan Dron**.

Precision Aviation Services has been an authorised service centre for Leonardo for the past 25 years.

Established at Wonderboom National Airport, Pretoria, in 1993, it handles maintenance and spares support for the company's civil helicopters in sub-Saharan Africa.

It was the first Leonardo excellent service centre in Africa. 'Excellent' ranking is assigned to select centres that are focused on maintaining third-party fleets and having the largest scope of service capabilities.

According to Leonardo, its acquisition move will mean improved back-up for operators of its helicopters. Among other benefits, PAS will now have access to a greatly increased spares holding at its facility.



"They're going to provide huge inventory availability," a PAS source revealed.

That expanded inventory will allow PAS to provide spares for helicopters throughout the continent. Previously, many components had to be shipped from Italy; now they will be much closer to customers.

PAS already has the ability to deploy personnel overnight to countries such as Kenya to offer technical support for civilian aircraft-on-ground (AOG) cases. It will also now be able to offer maintenance support for military

Upping the capability: The scale and extent of Precision Aviation Services' offering to customers will increase under the new arrangement with Leonardo.

PICTURE: PAS.

helicopters sold under the Leonardo or AgustaWestland brands throughout the continent.

The Wonderboom facility includes maintenance hangars, bonded warehouse, workshops and other services. It provides maintenance, product support, engineering services and spares availability for a range of models, including the AW119 single-engine, AW109 light twin series, AW family, including the AW139, AW169 and AW189, with the possibility to extend these capabilities to future products.

Leonardo says that strengthening its level of customer support via PAS is a recognition that a helicopter's competitiveness is linked, not only to the quality of the product itself, but also to the ability to provide total capability solutions for it.

PAS' operation will now progressively increase the level of service, allowing access to a range of maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) solutions for both existing and future models. ■

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Safety issues, many tied to MRO, have long plagued African aviation. Could this now be changing across the continent? Chuck Grieve reports.

TIME FOR AFRICA TO REPAIR ITS SAFETY STANDARDS...

At least 52 of around 100 air carriers currently banned from operating in Europe are based in Africa. Their problem? Unacceptable safety standards, many rooted in maintenance.

The EU Air Safety list pulls no punches. It lays the blame on “the authorities with responsibility for regulatory oversight” in the countries it names.

But the situation is changing, albeit slowly. In southern Africa, Air Zimbabwe (UM) – banned since 2017 for “unaddressed safety deficiencies” – had its sights set before Covid-19 on resuming operations to Europe in the last quarter of 2020.

The airline is currently under ‘reconstruction’; its \$392 million of debt ring-fenced to give it space to rebuild its reputation, routes and network.

Its maintenance manager, Phillip Zvasiya, noted in a recent interview that UM had regained its International Air Transport Association (IATA) safety audit certification and was working “to address findings” to requalify for its EU third-country operator’s licence.

Elsewhere, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) is working with civil aviation authorities to support development of the African air transport sector. Its second three-year programme, the EU-Africa safety in aviation (EU-ASA) project, builds on work of the first project which, although mainly focused on regional outcomes, also provided bilateral assistance that contributed to the removal of Benin and Mozambique from the air safety list.

Dr Kwasi Adjekum, assistant professor of aviation at the University of North Dakota and a close observer of African aviation, said Africa is a “potpourri of good and bad” with some countries “doing well” in terms of objective safety performance metrics.

He singled out the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for its “strenuous efforts at improvements” in the eight critical elements of its state safety oversight system. He said: “In the areas of legislation (73%) and organisation (75%), DRC has gone above the global average of 71%.

“A remarkable feat was the score in airworthiness (92%) which, in my opinion, augurs well for the MRO service provision capabilities in DRC.”

Ghana and South Africa also had excellent scores for the effective implementation (EI) on the critical elements (CE) of the universal safety oversight audit programme (USOAP), even though Ghana, unlike South Africa, does not have a dedicated MRO industry.

Adjekum said the continent, as a whole, has made good progress in eliminating the problems of past decades including “lax regulatory oversight, obsolete infrastructure, aging and poorly maintained fleets, and inadequate technical training of aviation personnel”.

Fleet modernisation, though capital intensive, is a big factor in safety improvements from the perspectives of flight operations and maintenance. However, there remains “room for improvement”.



On the comeback trail: Air Zimbabwe is tackling the issues which had reduced its airworthy fleet to a single Boeing 767-200ER.

PICTURE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

He said: “There seems to be more of an emphasis on compliance safety – reacting to accidents and implementing the bare minimum safety standards – rather than devising proactive safety management frameworks, such as data-driven approaches to identifying current and emerging safety risks.”

However, this is changing. Some countries, among them South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Cape Verde, Senegal and Ghana, are moving toward performance-based safety oversight.

Adjekum advocates a shift to big data analytics and artificial intelligence/machine learning to model risk for effective safety decision-making. “I know that some countries in Africa, such as Rwanda, are leveraging data-capturing technology to enhance safety assurance components of safety management systems (SMS) among aviation service providers,” he said.

South Africa also has robust safety data collection, analysis and sharing with industry, he added.

He encouraged sharing safety data among regulatory bodies and service providers; a repository for aggregate data would benefit service providers whose operations may be limited in scope and complexity.

The biggest challenges facing African MROs are the high set-up costs in terms of finance, human resources and technology. “There is also the issue with the continuous requirements to meet local, international and industry-wide standards in a world where technology is always evolving,” he added.

African MROs find themselves competing with European and Asian operators, who often enjoy a competitive advantage from greater economies of scale. Adjekum said his research suggests another challenge is the “flight of the experienced and highly trained workforce to the Middle East” where they are in great demand.

One way forward, he suggested, would see countries with successful MRO operations, among them Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and Tunisia, partnering with other African countries seeking to develop their own MRO service capabilities, “in the spirit of intra-African aviation support”.



Dr Kwasi Adjekum: Africa is a “potpourri of good and bad”.

PICTURE: UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA.

Whether it's birds, mammals or reptiles, wildlife populations in and around an airport pose a significant threat to operations. **Chloë Greenbank** finds out how one specialist company is helping African airports to mitigate this risk.

WILD EYES...

Air traffic might be down more than 60% across Africa as a result of the global pandemic but, with the aviation industry now focused on recovery, wildlife hazard management at airports is integral to the safe restart of operations.

"It's been a difficult time for airports. However, maintaining safe, secure operations is critical," said Cerian Henshaw, director of operations at Aviaire, a UK company specialising in wildlife hazard safeguarding and data services.

"It's different for every airport. Some have seen wildlife populations increase as a result of the reduction in air traffic, while others haven't noted that much change.

"Fundamentally, though, the lack of air traffic has presented an opportunity for airports to gain a better understanding of the conditions and factors attracting birds and other animals to their facility so they can be effectively managed."

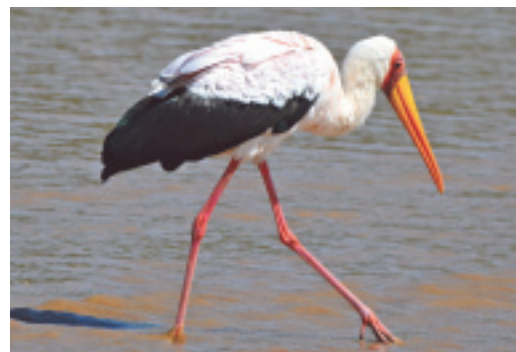
Aviaire has been working with Banjul International Airport in The Gambia to address its wildlife hazard management strategy. Home to more than 550 avian species, The Gambia is well known as a bird lovers' paradise. However, the risk of avian ingestion or any damage to aircraft and airside facilities poses a significant threat to airport operations.



With bird-strike costing the global aviation industry around \$1.2 billion annually, according to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Henshaw explained that all airports are subject to the risk. "However, Banjul is further compounded by the fact that it is in the line of flight of two double migratory corridors."

Aviaire has been working alongside the airport's operations team to support them in developing a better understanding of the factors influencing the migratory routes and associated wildlife populations. "We have been working with airport management, as well as the operations team and key authorities outside the airport," said Henshaw. "They all have a role to play in mitigating the risk of wildlife hazards."

With birds and other wildlife attracted to an airport and its surrounding environment because it offers something they want, one of the key factors for consideration at Banjul is waste management. "We've engaged with the office of



the president and the Gambia Civil Aviation Authority to address this issue around waste management," said Henshaw, referencing a large waste disposal site just outside the airport's perimeters, which provides the perfect feeding ground for birds.

"By reducing this attraction for birds, such as kites, the airport can mitigate the likelihood of them venturing into the critical phases of flight for aircraft as they approach or take-off from Banjul."

She also highlighted that working in partnership with local communities and stakeholders, alongside the authorities, is key to achieving sustainable solutions and successfully managing factors outside an airport's jurisdiction. "We have been doing a lot of outreach work with the elders in the community close to Banjul Airport, as well as local schools," she explained.

While birds might be the most common threat in terms of a strike risk, animals such as elephants, wildebeest, baboons, snakes and even domestic animals, such as cattle and dogs, all pose a threat of disrupting airport operations, particularly in terms of runway incursions.

"Fundamentally it's the same process in terms of managing these risks," said Henshaw. "It's about understanding the behaviour patterns of the species presenting a threat, what their characteristics are and the factors influencing their behaviour, such as environmental, climatic or human factors. Then we can address those influences and manage them, to repel the attractant for that creature to be in that conflict zone."

Given that the majority of serious wildlife-related incidents occur during take-off and landing, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) recommends airports address all potential wildlife hazard risks within 13km of an aerodrome.

Good quality data collection is integral to the process of building an accurate picture of wildlife occurrences and movements within this range. In addition to field surveys, data can be collected using an avian radar, which, although an expensive investment, far exceeds human capabilities as it enables data to be collated 24/7 over extended periods of time.

Nevertheless, Henshaw emphasised that a successful wildlife hazard management strategy



All hazards: While birds like the hooded vulture (left), yellow-billed stork and red-cheeked cordonbleu (far left) might be the most common threat in terms of a strike risk, animals such as elephants pose a threat of disrupting airport operations, including runway incursions.

PICTURES; BIRDSIMAGESTOCK.COM

Far left: The Aviaire wildlife control team at Banjul International Airport focus on ensuring safe operations.

PICTURE; AVIAIRE

Why growing is a pain at Khartoum

Khartoum needs a new airport. But, with that project at a standstill, a study has recommended far-reaching improvements to the existing facility in the Sudanese capital. Alan Dron reports.

When it opened in 1947, like many airports of its generation, Khartoum International was built close to the city it served. Now, however, just 4km from the centre and with residential districts at both ends of its single runway, its ability to expand is severely limited.

Additionally, a February 2020 report from Khartoum University's engineering faculty, found that the current airport, while playing a vital role in the country's economy, was suffering from "serious congestion, delay and cancellation problems" that were becoming a daily occurrence.

To ease these problems, for some years Sudan has been planning a new international airport at Omdurman, 40km south of the capital.

The new \$1.15 billion airport's first phase aims to be capable of handling six million passengers annually. It will have two 4,000metre runways (as opposed to the current airport's single 2,980metre strip).

The new airport started construction early in 2019, with work scheduled to be complete within 36 months. However, an official of the Turkish construction firm, Summa, handling the work, told *African Aerospace* that the project had been suspended more than a year ago.

There is no indication as to when it may resume.

The Khartoum University study noted: "Unfortunately, construction of the new airport in the short term is extremely limited by the country's weak financial situation and lack of financing by international funds."

Instead, it considered ways of improving the existing airport to meet demand, which has been increasing by around 5% annually.

It identified areas for improvement, including expansion of the existing terminal building, extending the apron to allow more aircraft parking space, and increasing both the length of the runway and the width of taxiways to allow increased operational flexibility and reduce delays experienced by airlines.

Raising funds for such improvements may depend on Sudan being removed from the US list of countries sanctioned for allegedly supporting terrorist organisations. ■

is about combining modern technology, such as avian radar, with a human presence and the appropriate training. "One of the most important things at the airports in Africa we work with is a boots-on-the-ground presence," she said. "Having a comprehensive training framework in place is also key in helping to determine the responsibilities of those involved and ensuring best practice in their roles."

Aviaire is focused on supporting a holistic approach to mitigating the likelihood of wildlife problems. Techniques that can be deployed to deter animals and birds range from bio-acoustics and pyrotechnics to lasers and netting.

However, Henshaw warned that getting equipment into a country is also a factor for consideration. "The transport of equipment and getting it through customs on arrival can be tricky," she said, citing past experience.

Aviaire previously worked on a wildlife hazard management project in Rwanda for Kigali Airport, where bringing pyrotechnics into the country proved a complicated process requiring special licenses.

With climate change having an impact on

behavioural and migratory patterns for birds, what does this mean going forward for African airports?

"Ultimately, just as no two airports are the same, no two bird species are the same in terms of their behavioural patterns. So, it comes back to understanding what wildlife species are in and around the airport, getting good quality data and understanding the risk assessment, then you can employ a strategic, cost-effective plan and focus on the techniques and equipment needed to manage those hazards and safeguard your airport."

In the more immediate future, though, Henshaw said the focus is on ensuring safe operations as African airports start to see demand return for air traffic. "Following the pandemic and the lack of aircraft movements, airports need to demonstrate how safe their operations are and wildlife hazard management is key to that," she said.

"It's about rebuilding relationships between the different stakeholders, establishing and understanding what needs to be done in terms of managing wildlife hazards. Then we can deliver the most appropriate solutions where and when they're needed on or off an aerodrome." ■



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« Tous les partenaires de l'industrie doivent adopter une approche systémique pour comprendre, jauger et s'adapter à la pandémie du Covid-19. Il faut être très réactif », souligne Luis Felipe de Oliveira qui a pris ses fonctions à la tête d'ACI World fin juin 2020. Son analyse de la crise et sa vision pour une relance pérenne avec Anuradha Deenapanray Chappard.

LES 3C POUR REBÂTIR L'INDUSTRIE AÉRONAUTIQUE

● COLLABORATION ● COOPÉRATION ● COHÉRENCE

Les défis auxquels sont confrontés l'industrie de l'aviation, les aéroports et le transport aérien durant cette crise historique sont énormes. Le nouveau patron d'ACI World estime que « la collaboration, la coopération et la cohérence à tous les échelons de l'industrie sont les éléments clés pour rebâtir la capacité des services aériens au niveau mondial ».

Il faudra également adopter des pratiques plus durables et capitaliser sur la technologie, l'intelligence artificielle et l'innovation pour rehausser le niveau de l'industrie sur toute la chaîne, et mieux l'équiper pour affronter les innombrables défis dont l'amélioration de l'expérience des passagers. Il s'agit avant tout de leur redonner confiance.

D'où, l'importance de la sûreté et de la sécurité qui dit-il « ont toujours été et resteront la priorité de notre industrie. Cela ne doit guère changer ». La world smart security vision 2040 d'ACI jette ainsi les bases pour permettre aux aéroports d'atteindre un filtrage de sécurité continu et harmonieux durant les opérations en temps réel, après le Covid-19.

Ce programme met en avant les concepts et les solutions visant à augmenter l'efficacité, privilégiant une prise de risque calculée et à améliorer l'expérience des passagers, tout en assurant la sûreté des opérations aéroportuaires. Il repose sur une coalition entre des aéroports leaders, les régulateurs et les compagnies aériennes.

La vision 2040 examine non seulement les facteurs à long terme qui affectent l'aviation et les aéroports, mais tient compte pleinement du contexte actuel, c'est-à-dire de la relance économique et opérationnelle de même que la priorité accordée par l'industrie à l'aspect sanitaire et d'hygiène pour faire face à la crise.

Pour cela, il faut d'abord un alignement et ensuite intégrer la composante santé/sanitaire à l'aviation. « Les gouvernements et les régulateurs mondiaux feront vraisemblablement des requêtes concernant des contrôles de santé, soit des dépistages de santé ou des passeports de santé. Ces changements nécessitent une harmonisation à l'échelle internationale. La mise en place de ce processus sera capitale au cours des prochaines années, et nous devons nous assurer que les préoccupations et les intérêts des aéroports y soient intégrés », ajoute-t-il.

Le nouveau programme ACI airport health accreditation permet aux aéroports de jauger si leurs mesures sanitaires sont conformes aux meilleures pratiques de l'industrie par rapport aux recommandations CART (council aviation recovery taskforce) de l'OACI.

Par ailleurs, le DG d'ACI World déplore « des décisions étatiques unilatérales » sur les nouvelles mesures qui font tort à l'industrie et freinent les efforts de relance dans le monde. Il souligne que des mesures de quarantaine inutiles ont particulièrement un effet négatif sur la confiance des passagers. ■

Luis Felipe de Oliveira:
« Les gouvernements et les régulateurs mondiaux feront vraisemblablement des requêtes concernant des contrôles de santé, soit des dépistages de santé ou des passeports de santé. »

IMAGE: ACI WORLD.



SUMMARY

THE 3CS NEEDED TO REBUILD THE INDUSTRY

Luis Felipe de Oliveira, the new director general for Airports Council International (ACI) World, believes that the three Cs – collaboration, cooperation and consistency across the industry – are key elements to rebuild the capacity of air services globally.

“All industry partners must take a systemic approach to understand, gauge, and adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic. We must be very responsive,” said the man who took over the hotspot in June.

The aviation industry, airports and air transport, are facing huge challenges to fight back following the pandemic.

The DG believes it will necessitate more sustainable practices, plus a focus on technology, artificial intelligence and innovation, to better equip the industry to face the numerous challenges, including improving the passenger experience.

But first, it is vital to restore passenger confidence, he emphasised.

“Safety and security has always been, and will remain, the priority of our industry. This should not change,” he said.

The organisation's world smart security vision 2040 lays the foundation for airports to achieve seamless security screening during real-time operations post-Covid-19.

ACI has also launched its airport health accreditation programme, allowing facilities to gauge whether their health measures comply with industry best practices following the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) council aviation recovery taskforce (CART) recommendations.

In conclusion, de Oliveira said he deplores “unilateral state decisions” on new measures that are hampering recovery efforts around the world. He also believes some unnecessary quarantine measures are having negative effects on passenger confidence. ■

ANURADHA DEENAPANRAY CHAPPARD.



Up for grabs: Two derelict former Somali Air Force Antonov An-24s are among 100 aircraft being auctioned off if they are not reclaimed or removed by owners.

PICTURE: ANDREW THOMAS WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

Want an aircraft? Try the second-hand KAA dealer

An auction by Kenya Airports Authority could result in a bonanza for museums... or a lot of old aircraft heading for the breaker's yard.
Alan Dron
reports.

The notice in the *Kenya Gazette* was astonishing. In the usually sober pages of the Kenyan Government's official publication of August 14 was a list of vintage aircraft that would make any aviation enthusiast's eyes light up. Or make an airport official's eyes narrow.

Everything from Douglas DC-6s and DC-3s to a Lockheed TriStar, a fleet of Fokker 50s and a group of elderly Antonovs was listed... as not only taking up space at four Kenya Airports Authority (KAA) sites but also being potential safety hazards.

The aircraft had been littering aprons and airside areas at Jomo Kenyatta International, Wilson, Moi International, and Lokichogio for years. And KAA had decided that enough was enough.

The notice was blunt: remove your aircraft and pay any outstanding parking or other charges within 30 days, or the aircraft will be auctioned off.

Some of the abandoned aircraft have been at the airports for many years and are posing an increasing problem.

"They are a safety and security risk because the airports where these junks are abandoned have been very much constrained in terms of parking capacity," said KAA's general manager, safety and operations, Harrison Machio.

"The entire apron at some airports is littered with them. They are occupying prime space. Current operators cannot even find a place to park."

Many of the aircraft belonged to airlines that have long since disappeared from Africa's aviation landscape. Others have slowly mouldered away while the subject of dispute over their ownership.

"Given that the owners of some of them can't be traced, we felt that we had to notify them through a public forum – the *Kenya Gazette* notice – that if they are still interested in these aircraft, they have to come and remove them," Machio said. "Failing that, we shall auction them."

"Some of them have responded to our notice and have started engaging with us with a view to clearing their financial obligations to us in terms of landing and parking fees.

"There are around 100 aircraft and with about a quarter

of those affected the owners been engaging with us. Some claim the aircraft are under maintainers, so we are giving them time to fix [them]."

There is an added problem. In many cases, it is unclear exactly who owns the abandoned aircraft. "Many of them have various court cases pertaining to them. There are various issues over determining who is the rightful owner. We are going to analyse it case-by-case and determine what is the best way forward," said Machio.

"The process is under way. The notification we gave has expired. We're just finalising the paperwork and we're going to carry out the process."

As a precursor to the auction, KAA has been obtaining valuations on each of the aircraft. This will help the auctioneers set a price for each one but will also give KAA some idea of what the aircraft might fetch for scrap value, if they fail to sell.

□□□□□

Sadly, many of the aircraft are likely to end up in the latter category: "Many of them have not flown for at least five, seven or 10 years," said Machio. "Physical examination reveals some of them have no engines or avionics; we don't see them as flying."

There is a possibility that a few of the aircraft could yet have new careers, even if they never get off the ground again: "There's a new concept appearing in this part of the world: people convert aircraft into restaurants," said Machio.

Several such projects have been undertaken around the world and some have proved to have a sustainable life ahead of them; others, however, have fallen into disrepair anew after the initial novelty for diners has worn off.

There is one final option, suggested Machio: "As an airport, we may retain them; we receive a number of school visits and we want to set up a museum to maintain the history of our airports from the time aviation started in this country. I think we're considering retaining a number of these old aircraft."

The need to move Covid-19 relief supplies around Africa has shone a spotlight on the humanitarian missions carried out by two Kenyan airlines. Alan Dron reports.

WHAT A RELIEF!

The global pandemic has seen vast quantities of protective clothing and medical supplies being ferried around the world. However, for some airlines, this crisis has been just the latest of many in which they have been involved over the years.

Kenya's Astral Aviation and ALS are two operators where humanitarian operations make up a significant part of their operations. Both operate throughout Africa for organisations such as UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Astral's CEO, Sanjeev Gadhia, estimates that his company has flown more than 2,000 humanitarian missions over the past 20 years, carrying tens of thousands of tonnes of cargo, both to and within Africa.

"Humanitarian flights account for 25% of our business and form an important part of our scheduled and charter strategy by offering on-demand flights to the humanitarian sector," he said.

"During the pandemic we have experienced an unprecedented demand for the air freight of personal protective equipment (PPE) from China to Africa, and from our Nairobi hub to 24 countries in Africa.

"Currently," he said in late November, "we are working on a repeat charter for more than 100 tonnes of PPE from China to Africa, which will involve the charter of a Boeing 747F and a 787 passenger freighter to uplift the cargo from Guangzhou to Nairobi for onward connection on our Boeing 727F from Nairobi to Juba."

Like Astral, ALS has found itself facing tough competition during the pandemic from passenger airlines desperately trying to bring in some revenue from freighting services. One major African carrier, for example, was offering cargo flights with a De Havilland Dash 8-400 at prices 36% lower than the average market offer.

ALS CEO, Shakeel Khan, told November's 12th Global Humanitarian Aviation Conference: "There was no way we could compete with that."

Both Astral and ALS have heterogeneous fleets. In Astral's case, that ranges from a Fokker F27, with a cargo capacity of six tonnes, to a Boeing 747-400F (110 tonnes).

ALS, meanwhile, operates everything from Cessna Caravans, able to get into small airstrips, to Embraer 145 regional jets.

Those varied fleets allow the two companies to handle a wide range of missions. Recently, for example, ALS has been involved in exchanges of prisoners of war in Yemen, under the auspices of the ICRC.

Astral has also been involved in Yemen. The complexities of operating humanitarian missions in a war zone have included having to limit time on the ground in the strife-torn country to a one-hour window.



One aspect of Astral's operations that Gadhia says has helped the company handle difficult missions has been its practice of including a member of its charter team on all such flights. The extra crew member's role is "to ensure that pre-flight and post-flight coordination are done smoothly", as there are numerous

interactions with the cargo-handlers that cannot be done by the crew.

"We take responsibility at the destination to ensure that the cargo has been accounted for, instead of just offloading it and departing. This reduces the claims that may arise and [provides] a high level of transparency," explained Gadhia.

Astral and ALS had to cope with increased workloads and restricted staff numbers, with many personnel having to quarantine after contact with suspected coronavirus victims, plus strict national regulations on the movement of people.

In ALS' case, for example, it was unable to rotate many of its crews, with unutilised Kenyan staff being stuck in Nairobi, while non-Kenyan resident staff were unable to enter the country.

Speaking at the virtual conference, Khan noted that not only had the airline faced problems in moving staff to where they were needed, it had necessarily incurred considerably increased costs, both from installing precautions to protect staff from infection and, in some cases, paying for medical help when they had fallen ill.

Nevertheless, despite the financial stress, ALS had continued to keep personnel on full pay despite reduced revenues, "because you need the loyalty of staff".

Similarly, Astral's Gadhia noted that the company had not reduced its personnel: "It is morally wrong to lay-off staff during bad times when they have worked hard during the good times."

TOP: Standing ready: One of Astral Aviation's Fokker F27s with a consignment of relief supplies for war-torn Yemen.

ABOVE: Workhorse: Humanitarian supplies are frequently transported in bulk to Astral Aviation's Nairobi hub, where they are then broken down for onward journeys in smaller aircraft, such as this McDonnell Douglas DC-9 freighter.

PICTURES: ASTRAL AVIATION.

AFRICAN Digest

Asky: Integrating new technology to aid the recovery.

PICTURE: NOEL KOKOU TADEGNON.



ASKY THRUSTS FORWARD WITH SABRE

With the Covid-19 crisis seriously affecting all airlines, more than ever they need to integrate new technologies to optimise their sales and revenues. Now one west African airline has done just that.

Sabre Corporation, the leading technology provider to the global travel industry, has signed a contract with Togolese airline, Asky, to support the gradual resumption of its operations.

The American company has a tailor-cut development strategy to drive digital transformation of airline businesses and expand its activities in Africa.

Sabre has been the passenger service system provider for Asky's strategic partner, Ethiopian Airlines, for more than 13 years.

According to Gino Delmetti, vice president EMEA travel solutions for Sabre Corporation, this technology has helped Ethiopian to become the most profitable airline in Africa, as well as a truly global player.

"We want to help other airlines on the continent to have a similar success," he said. "We have accelerated our innovation roadmap throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Our passenger service system (PSS) has capabilities that can help African airlines leapfrog ahead of their competitors and transform them into better retailers. We are also committed to expanding the reach of African airlines, enabling them to access a broader range of travellers through our global distribution system."

The Sabre commercial platform will bring a complete digital transformation to Asky's operation through intelligent retailing that includes dynamic pricing capabilities, a flexible and open advance passenger information (API) hub, an ultra-fast shopping engine, and a mobile-first, consumer-grade workspace for airport agents.

"Sabre's revenue optimisation technology will help Asky to take a 360-degree approach to forecasting, analysing, and optimising its revenue streams by providing real-time visibility into the total revenue for every flight, every market and every departure date," explained Delmetti.

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NEW SIMULATOR BOOST FOR STARLITE

South African-based Starlite Aviation Training Academy has bought an ALSIM AL250 simulator. The company, which offers a range of helicopter and fixed-wing services worldwide, said it chose the simulator in response to the growing demand for single and multi-engine instrument simulator training at its campus in Durban.

"The options of simulating analogue or glass cockpit at the touch of a button, the instrument and area navigation (RNAV) capabilities, and various other aspects, like the fact that the simulator fully satisfies European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) certification requirements, played a big role in our choice of selecting the AL250," explained Starlite managing director Klara Fouché.

The AL250 simulator addresses initial phase training needs – private pilot licence (PPL), commercial pilot's licence (CPL), instrument rating/multi-engine (IR/ME) – and offers both classic and glass cockpit instrumentation for each flight model at the flick of a switch. More than 65 are in operation worldwide.

"We are looking forward to installing the simulator in Durban's region and to starting a successful cooperation between our two companies," said ALSIM sales account manager, Nicolas de Lassus.

Since it was founded 20 years ago, the Starlite Aviation Training Academy has also established an approved maintenance organisation (AMO). Starlite Maintenance Johannesburg provides maintenance and logistics to medium and heavy-lift helicopters in the Puma, Bell, Sikorsky and Leonardo (Agusta Westland) fleets.

MARCELLE NETHERSOLE

Furthermore, Sabre is seeing a growing appetite for its low-cost-carrier (LCC) platform, Radixx, which enables smaller operators to access advanced retailing, distribution and fulfilment capabilities.

According to Delmetti: "As it is the low-cost sector that's expected to lead the recovery from Covid-19, many African carriers have a real opportunity to tap into this growth through deploying the right technology."

Sabre is steadily growing its agency partnerships in Africa. It recently signed a new agreement with southern Africa's largest agency network, BID Travel.

VINCENT CHAPPARD



DRAGONFLY AIMS TO BE OUT OF THIS WORLD

South Africa's little-heralded but substantial expertise in satellites and their sensors is being resurrected by a new entrant.

Start-up company, Dragonfly Aerospace, aims to create compact, high-performance satellite buses and imaging sensors for large constellations of satellites that provide persistent views of Earth.

Typically, these are used for agricultural monitoring; they scan for different types of crops and detect whether they are afflicted with problems – for example, a lack of water.

Similarly, the cameras can be used to monitor the progress of major infrastructure projects, such as dams or stadia. There are also obvious security applications, given that some of Dragonfly's cameras give a resolution as fine as 0.7 metres.

Dragonfly's smaller cameras tend to be purchased by academic institutions; larger models go to commercial companies and government agencies.

Although Dragonfly was set up in January 2020, CEO Bryan Dean said: "We're working with a technology and a skills base that has developed over the last 25 years in South Africa." The industry is centred around one town, Stellenbosch, and virtually all of Dragonfly's engineers have worked in the industry previously: "We're in quite a nice situation; we're very experienced," said Dean.

Back in the 1990s, he noted, South Africa's satellite technology was on a par with that of



Modern: Dragonfly is operating from this refurbished building in Stellenbosch. The Gecko camera produced by Dragonfly has already been on four space missions.

PICTURES: DRAGONFLY AEROSPACE.

much richer nations: "The first satellite [South Africa] launched, Sunsat, in 1999, was recognised as the best satellite of its class at the time."

"Sadly, we never had the capital to expand internationally and capitalise on the technology. This has been a real stumbling block for South Africa all along. It's almost like the industry has never got out of first gear. That's been a real challenge and frustration," said Dean.

To prevent this problem recurring, Dragonfly has signed up with a new – as yet unnamed – investor. "We've now pulled in venture capital funding from an international base, with the mindset to scale the company to be an international competitor. That's the differentiator from before."

Watch this space, as they say. **ALAN DRON**

UN PÔLE DE FORMATION AÉRONAUTIQUE EN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

La ville de Yamoussoukro, connue pour la déclaration du traité sur la libéralisation du transport aérien en Afrique, accueillera prochainement une nouvelle école de formation aéronautique.

L'école régionale des métiers de l'aéronautique est le fruit de la volonté d'Air Côte d'Ivoire, de la Banque africaine de développement et de la Société d'Exploitation et de Développement Aéroportuaire, Aéronautique et Métrologique (SODEXAM). Elle sera installée dans l'enceinte de l'Institut National Polytechnique Félix Houphouët Boigny (INP-HB) de Yamoussoukro.

C'est un projet de premier ordre dans cette région car il n'y a pas eu de formation du personnel de l'aviation en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre depuis la disparition d'Air Afrique en 2002.

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Pour René Décurey, directeur général d'Air Côte d'Ivoire, cette école représente un double enjeu. Le premier est de disposer d'un personnel qualifié sur le long terme, un élément indispensable au vu de la situation tendue pour la compagnie, au démarrage en 2012 car elle a dû faire appel à un personnel expatrié coûteux pour les métiers techniques. Le second est de contribuer à l'emploi des jeunes nationaux dans le domaine de l'aéronautique.

René Décurey reste cohérent avec sa vision de développement intégral et durable. Selon lui, cette école positionnera la Côte d'Ivoire comme un pôle de formation pour toute l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre.

Dans un premier temps, l'école formera des pilotes et des mécaniciens avion. C'est une priorité pour assurer la continuité des opérations de la compagnie ivoirienne. Le catalogue de formation s'élargira par la suite à d'autres métiers de l'aérien.

Air Côte d'Ivoire continue de développer son expertise technique. Elle a réalisé la première opération « Check-C » sur l'un de ses A320 dans son centre d'Abidjan, le 12 novembre dernier. C'est une étape importante dans sa collaboration avec Airbus Consulting pour accroître ses capacités en maintenance.

Air Côte d'Ivoire consolide ainsi ses assises en vue d'être un partenaire MRO pour la flotte d'Airbus en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre.

VINCENT CHAPPARD

SUMMARY

IVORY COAST TO HOST NEW AVIATION TRAINING SCHOOL

The city of Yamoussoukro in south central Ivory Coast, best known for the signing of the treaty on the liberalisation of air transport in Africa, will soon host a new aviation training school.

The regional Aeronautical Trades School is a joint-venture between Air Côte d'Ivoire, the African Development Bank, and the Airport, Aeronautical and Metrological Exploitation and Development Company (SODEXAM).

It will be built in the grounds of the Polytechnic Institute Félix Houphouët Boigny (INP-HB) in Yamoussoukro, a city that lies to the north-west of the country's capital, Abidjan.

The school fills a void in aviation training in west and central Africa that's existed since the demise of Air Afrique in 2002.

Dahir Mohammed *Marcelle Nethersole speaks to the CEO and president of United Aviation Solutions.*

1

■ Can you tell me about United Aviation Solutions?

United Aviation Solutions (Utd.) provides a bridge for our network of African-based airlines, suppliers, and stakeholders, to the markets of Europe and North America.

We introduce a solution for those facing difficulties in sourcing spare parts and meeting maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) demand due to the capacity crunch in labour.

We trade aircraft spares, engines, auxiliary power units (APUs), landing gear, and airframes to airlines and MROs globally.

Our maintenance and repair division is responsible for aircraft, engine, APU and component repairs across all Air Transport Association (ATA) chapters.



PICTURE: DAHIR MOHAMMED

3

■ What are the challenges you face when working in Africa?

Challenges have been the narrative of African aviation but not from me. I simply focus on finding solutions that build new opportunities. Wayne Dyer, a fantastic author, once said: "Change the way you look at things and the things you look at change." Africa has demonstrated that it has adequate technical depth to equal any other maintenance organisations in Europe or the USA. Our African airlines and MRO partners' local civil aviation authority, EASA and FAA certifications bear testimony to this assertion.

5

■ How did you become interested in aviation?

My connection in aviation started at the age of five when my family moved from Addis Ababa in Ethiopia to Queens, New York, in the US. My father was an aviator and moved us when he was awarded the opportunity to open an Ethiopian Airlines US office in 1978. I remember watching the movie *American Graffiti* on a TWA flight to America. It was my starting point in developing as an aviator.

2

■ I know you are involved in the Brown Condor Initiative. Can you explain what it is?

Our business approach is hinged upon the legacy of Colonel John C Robinson and the Brown Condor Initiative (BCI) post-Covid-19 recovery portal. The BCI is a joint venture (JV) between us, the African Airlines Association (AFRAA), and 46 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)-certified airlines and maintenance and repair organisations (MROs), where we have agreed to help protect airlines and repair shops from the damage that Covid-19 has inflicted, such as workforce shortage, high labour cost, uncertain supply chain and unsustainable intelligence development.

The BCI is named in honour of Colonel Robinson (nicknamed The Brown Condor), who was the first African American pilot to participate in the victorious Ethiopian war against Italy in 1934. He then dedicated his life to training young Africans in the complexities of aviation, particularly pilots and technicians. He did so by designing the original BCI portal to exchange aviation expertise between our two continents.

4

■ What is next for United Aviation Solutions?

I aim to continue the Robinson legacy by championing the BCI portal he developed, where African and American aviation are once again interdependent on the platform of aviation intelligence.

Many African airlines are awarded trophies annually for their services, but the African MRO pillar has never reached the same standard. We are finding solutions to make that happen in recognition of the leap in quality that African airlines and MROs have made.

We are also working with The John C Robinson Mississippi Aviation Heritage Museum in launching an aviation academy to mirror the success of self-sustaining African airlines academy programmes here in the USA.

6

■ What does a typical day for you involve?

The day begins at around 3.30am and I get to my office – a converted garage – at 4.30. I believe if [Jeff] Bezos, [Bill] Gates and Steve Jobs can benefit from an early start, then I can too.

The day takes off with the first phone call or e-mail, and then the rest of the day is on full throttle.

Each day I try to follow the words of Matthew McConaughey: "be your own hero" – in your faith, family, friends, and business. My typical day involves trying to balance all four.



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