

SHOW BUSINESS



AN ARABIAN AEROSPACE PUBLICATION

SEPT 5 2024

NUMBERS ADD UP FOR FIRST OUTING

Egyptian premiere a big boost for regional business



Leonardo's Vittorio Della Bella (left) and Ehad Ali Abdelmaqsoud Abbas of PAS celebrate the new agreement

Status upgrade: PAS raises the game with Leonardo

Egypt's Petroleum Air Services (PAS) is to become an authorised service centre for Italian helicopter manufacturer Leonardo.

At the show yesterday, representatives of both companies signed an agreement to upgrade PAS's status from its current level of recognised service centre for

Leonardo's commercial helicopter products.

PAS has deployed Leonardo's AW139 helicopters since 2009 to provide services for Egypt's oil and gas industry. The aircraft are used to support the oil and gas industry through offshore transport and expansion in the eastern Mediterranean. The company

provides maintenance services for Leonardo aircraft operated by several third-party operators, including Saudi Aramco and the Royal Jordanian Air Force. Authorised service centre status will allow PAS to add more services and greater spare parts management to benefit customers.

▶ CONTINUED ON P5

The first Egypt International Air Show is being voted a success as the final day gets underway.

More than 15,000 visitors led to packed aisles in the exhibition hall, and OEMs with aircraft on the display line reported useful discussions.

Predictably the event has been defence heavy – but with a number of requirements expected from the growing Egyptian Air Force that was not a surprise. Talks will be continuing as the sun sets on the show tonight.

The Egyptian Air Force was set to announce a purchase of two new C-130J-30 Super Hercules, which will be delivered in 2026.

These are expected to be part of a staggered purchase of 12, coming over the next few years replacing some of the fleet of 24 1976 built C-130Hs that show visitors will have seen shuttling personnel to the El Alamein showground this week.

The deal has been a long time coming and is believed to have been completed earlier this week. It was given a US Defense Security Co-operation Agency (DSCA) notification to Congress, back in January 2022.

There were some 180 official delegations visiting and more than 100 countries participating among the 300 exhibitors. ▲



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CONTINUED FROM P1

PAS raises game with Leonardo

PAS has a fleet of 31 helicopters from AgustaWestland, Airbus and Bell and is the sole provider of air transportation services to Egypt's oil and gas industry. The operator is owned 75% by the Egypt Petroleum Company and 25% by US-based helicopter operator Bristow.

PAS also has a fixed-wing fleet of three De Havilland Canada (DHC) CRJ900 regional jets and five DHC Dash 8-300 turboprops that are used for recently introduced scheduled and charter flights. Most flights are domestic, with regional services to neighbouring countries such as Turkiye, Cyprus and Lebanon. Charters are a B2B business, with flights sold to tourism companies, which then sell the seats to the public.

The CRJs operate one scheduled international service between Cairo and Aqaba, Jordan, with services to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, due to begin "very soon", according to PAS general manager, public relations, Nancy Sameh.

"We want to upgrade and increase the fleet – more helicopters and upgrade the fixed-wing fleet," Sameh added, with more helicopters being the priority, to meet growing demand from customers. Both helicopters and the DHC 8-300s can be outfitted with a VIP cabin configuration, if necessary.

The company is headquartered in Cairo, but has eight sites around the country, with an MRO base at Alexandria's Borg El Arab airport.

Training is key in Egypt Air Show deals

Two companies within the EgyptAir Group signed deals with Airbus at the show yesterday that aim to improve efficiency and safety in the commercial aviation sector.

EgyptAir Maintenance & Engineering (M&E) is to start the Airbus airframe MRO supplier qualification process, while EgyptAir Training Academy will partner the manufacturer in supplying training packages for the Airbus A350.

EgyptAir M&E signed an MoU to begin the qualification process to demonstrate adherence to industry best standards and become a preferred supplier for Airbus aircraft operators in Africa. EgyptAir said that the deal recognised the company's "exceptional technical abilities, state-of-the-art facilities and commitment to delivering the



▲ Airbus's Mikhail Houari and Capt Waled Soliman of EgyptAir training academy sign the deal at the show yesterday

highest standards of quality and safety in aviation maintenance.

"EgyptAir M&E chairman and CEO, Walid El-Khafif said. "This collaboration will not only enhance our ability to provide world-class maintenance services to our cus-

tomers, but also contribute to the sustainable growth of the aviation industry in Africa."

"Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient aviation ecosystem in Egypt and we look forward to many more years of cooperation," said Airbus' Africa and Middle East president, Mikail Houari. The partnership will enable EgyptAir M&E to offer a wider range of maintenance services for Airbus aircraft, including scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, component repair and technical support.

Meanwhile, EgyptAir Training Academy will supply training packages for the A350. The deal will support the order confirmed by the airline at last November's Dubai air show for 10 A350-900s, which will become the flagships of the fleet.

Well done Egyptian Air Force!

The Egyptian Air Force has gone that extra step at the inaugural Egyptian International Airshow, by sending a great cross section of aircraft from their vast inventory.

We all might have expected a Dassault Rafale to be on show, but by sending an F-16, Mirage 2000, two MiG-29M/M2s, C-130H Hercules, two Beech 1900s, two Leonardo AW149s, A109 and a VIP Mi-17 Hip helicopters we were all grateful.

Visitors also witnessed the airmanship of the Egyptian Air Force aerobatic team 'Silver Stars' several times during the three-day event.

They also saw several Lockheed C-130H Hercules and Airbus C295W airlifters flying in every morning, providing personnel of the Egyptian Air Force an opportunity to visit and educate themselves on the technologies and

capabilities that were on show here.

Commander of the Egyptian Air Force Lt General Mahmoud Foaad Abd El-Gawad also took the time to visit many of the companies to discuss their sales opportunities in Egypt.



▲ An Egyptian Air Force Lockheed C-130H Hercules taxis in on Day 1 of the airshow packed with personnel to look at the products on show



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Arabian Aerospace Show Business is published by Times Aerospace Publishing Ltd

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Distribution erving.dockery@aviationweek.com

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Embraer steadily building in Africa

Brazilian manufacturer Embraer has been steadily building up its presence in Africa, both through its airliners and its Super Tucano counter-insurgency and border patrol aircraft.

Although it is not expecting to make any sales announcements at the show, it decided to exhibit here because “Egypt is one of the strongest economies in the region and has always been at the forefront of commercial aviation,” according to vice-president sales and marketing, Africa and Middle East, Stephan Hannemann.

“Embraer has had commercial ties with the country’s national aviation group Egyptair for decades and we are proud of our strong relationship. Only in late 2022 we delivered three brand-new E190s to Egyptian lessor CIAF and Air Cairo and we look forward to strengthening the partnership even further.

“Northern Africa is a very busy market for Embraer; we’ve got aircraft operating across the region with airlines like Royal Air Maroc, Mauritania Airlines, Air Burkina and Air Cairo. As well as support-

ing these aircraft fleets, many of these airlines are also actively reviewing their future fleet needs.”

Recent months have seen several more African airlines acquiring Embraer regional jets or small narrowbodies; Air Botswana has just taken delivery of a new E175, Air Peace is taking on four E195 E2s and, most notably, Airlink in South Africa has a major fleet of more than 60 of the Brazilian-built jets, of various models.

“The market prospects are very diverse, there’s no ‘one-size fit all’, with markets having their own

needs and requirements across the huge continent,” Hannemann said.

African airlines are frequently short of funds; does this mean that the bulk of future acquisitions are likely to be used aircraft? “We support all transactions, regardless if new or pre-owned and this has been a winning recipe on the African continent. Airlink, for instance has recorded fundamental growth on Embraer equipment, adding a mix of new and pre-owned aircraft over the last couple of years and now approaching 70 Embraer jets,” he said.



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Expansion is on the cards for Red Sea Airlines

Red Sea Airlines marked the second anniversary of starting operations yesterday, with plans to expand its current fleet of three Boeing 737-800s to five early next year.

The airline is primarily a leisure carrier and has tapped into the rapidly growing market in Central Asia, the airline’s director of ground operations, Ahmed Mohamed El-Gendy said.

“Demand there is so high. Whenever I open a flight, four operators from there book all the seats. Because we’re a low-cost carrier, we can give them a competitive price.” The airline is operating from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, as well as from the Caucasus

– Armenia – and Eastern Europe – Romania and Moldova.

At present, western European destinations are largely in Germany and Italy, but the company plans to expand its route map in that region when its new aircraft arrive.

The company’s primary destinations for inbound tourists are Hurgada and Sharm El Sheikh, on Egypt’s Red Sea coast.

“We’re fully loaded to the east and want to go more to the west and Middle East,” said El-Gendy. The company will be able to handle that extra demand when the two new 737-800s, being acquired on lease purchase, arrive in Q1 2025.

The benefits of operating a single

type and model are obvious in terms of fleet commonality, which both eases the maintenance burden and also prevents any argument about salary between pilots on different types of aircraft.

The current problems in the Middle East had a severe initial effect on bookings from western Europe, “because not everybody is aware of the distance between [the problems] and here. At the beginning, it was really affecting us hard”. Curiously, numbers from eastern Europe were not affected so much.

“But now they are returning very quickly. We’ve recovered 100% of the flights and even have demand we can’t supply.”

▲ NEWS IN BRIEF

Jet trainer a new project for Amstone

Egyptian defence contractor Amstone is developing a jet trainer aircraft. A prototype of the aircraft, as yet unnamed, is scheduled to be unveiled in 2025.

No details are available, but the trainer project is the latest in a rapidly growing portfolio of products across all three domains – land, sea and air – being produced by Amstone, Egypt’s largest defence manufacturer and lead sponsor of the Egypt International Airshow.

Many of the company’s projects and products can not be discussed in public due to their sensitive nature. However, Amstone International Group CEO, Michael Botros said at the show that projects under way include the modernisation of aircraft cockpits to ‘glass’ configurations, or installation of the latest class of ‘panoramic’ displays.

In the rotary-wing market, modernisation of powerplants and rotor blades to give improved operational ceilings, particularly in the type of temperatures found in this region, are also under way.

Asked which fixed-wing or rotary-wing aircraft were being modified, Botros said that revealing the aircraft types would give a clue to the identities of their owners.

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Check out the Gyro from family firm

Magni Gyro has so far manufactured 1,300 units of its gyrocopters, quite an achievement for the Italian family run company. "My father, Vittorio Magni, started the company over 50 years ago," said Luca Varieze, managing director. "He worked for many years with helicopters but knew how expensive to run and maintain they are. So, he transferred himself from flying to the garage and ended up importing plans for a Bensen gyroplane from the USA – and built what became the first gyro to fly in Italy."

The company now works with engineers and manufactures its products with technical design fea-

tures making them highly versatile. "They are easy to use – students can learn to fly solo after 25 hours - cost-effective, and ideal for not only recreational activities, but also in professional and educational roles," said Varieze. Its fleet includes M16 Tandem Trainer, M22 Voyager, M24 Orion, and the M26 Victor – which Varieze describes as 'the most advanced point in performance, safety and comfort in a gyroplane.'

Customers include training centres and border patrol, as well as anti-poaching establishments. "We have them in Kenya and they are working really well to help combat poaching, said Varieze."



"Egypt is a country that would benefit from our gyrocopters. It is a big country that is in a region that needs surveillance – so this is the perfect investment." Varieze and his brother, Pietro, are both gyroplane pilots and flight instructors. "We are also responsible for the production and assembly lines, as well as being involved in the international growth of the business. This is an exciting time in aviation, and we see gyrocopters being part of the future," he said.

Flight dates for ambitious Egyptian drones

Three unmanned aerial systems parked in the show's static display, could fool you into thinking at least two of them were from Turkey's Baykar. They are, in fact Egyptian – designed and developed by Robotic Engineering System. The E-June 30 medium altitude long endurance (MALE) UAS looks similar to the Baykar Akinci. It has served the Egyptian Air Force for four to five years, accumulating 2,500 hours of flying time. According to the specification sheet the E-June 30 fulfils the intelligence surveillance reconnaissance role, through a switch-

able EO/IR/LRF FLIR (Forward Looking Infra Red) turret or synthetic aperture radar. With a mean take-off weight of 1,680kgs and a 12.4 metre wingspan, the E-June30 is powered by a pair of gasoline 115hp engines and can stay airborne for up to 14 hours. Its maximum speed is 260km per hour and it can operate between 18-20,000ft. Parked next to it is the Ahmous, not dissimilar to the Bayraktar TB-2. Design and development started in 2019 with ground testing almost complete which should lead to flight tests in 2025. Again,

it will be ISR configured, and with a MTOW of 1,200kg can utilise a switchable EO/IR/LRF FLIR or SAR. With an 18m wingspan and single 145hp gasoline engine, it has the ability to reach an operational ceiling of 23,000 feet (according to the spec sheet) and can reach a maximum speed of 250km/hour. Finally, there is the audacious looking 6th October, a MALE UAS still under development, with 16 hard points. First flight is expected in 2025. According to a source "This is a fresh design, essentially an upgrade on the E-June 30, with a MTOW of 2300 kgs". The

16 hardpoints – four on the front wing and six on the rear can carry a payload of up to 1,000kgs. Design and development were completed in June. The weapon in front of the display article is the company's 1,000kg GWD-6, which can house the explosives of the customer's requirements. It should fly up to 23,000ft courtesy of two 145hp gasoline powerplants and an 118 m wingspan, reaching 260 km/hr and stay airborne for 30 hours. The two 'blocks' at the top of the two vertical tales are directional antennas for beyond the line of sight (BLOS) ops.



The October 6 unmanned aerial system looks like a very ambitious programme, and is expected to make its first flight in 2025

▲ NEWS IN BRIEF **AMAC gets interest from visitors**

AMAC Aerospace, the maintenance and completion service centre for narrow and wide-body VIP aviation, has already had interest from new potential leads at the show. "We are looking forward to cooperating with them further, which is great news," said Alexis Ott, director maintenance sales and key account management. While the Swiss company works with various Middle Eastern and Africa customers, including Saudi Arabia, Ott said the company wasn't looking to expand in the region just yet. "While aviation is growing, many MROs are struggling to find certified staff. For us, we set our standards high in Basel, Switzerland, and want the same quality anywhere else in the world," he said.



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Art of jet flying

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TAI looks to consolidate

Dr Mehmet Demiroğlu, the new General Manager of Turkish Aerospace Industries, is at EIAS with a mission.

He talked about his main priorities of his new role – he was previously head of the helicopter division. “We have to make sure we produce what we are developing on a serial production scale, to the highest quality possible, in the most cost effective and fastest way.”

His predecessor, Temel Kotil, was a man who liked to get things done fast, and last year he managed to oversee four different platforms making their first flights – the

fifth-generation Kaan combat aircraft, Hurjet jet trainer, Anka 3 unmanned aircraft system and ATK 2 attack helicopter. Dr Demiroglu added: “Our efforts are now to consolidate our efforts and make plans for the serial production of all four.”

On the Kaan fighter, Dr Demiroğlu said: “We are developing the second and third prototype of the Kaan, and by the second half of next year they will fly. Then we will be doing extensive test flights just like we did the Hurjet – we did the 100th sortie inside 16 months in the Hurjet. We will do the same if

not better with the Kaan.

“The engine is the GE F110 as an interim powerplant, and we will soon announce in a matter of days on how we will proceed with a new indigenous engine with an international partner. Serial production should commence in 2028, and we are sticking to that timeline.

Turkey has ordered a first batch of 16 Hurjets to replace the Turkish Air Force T-38AM Talons in the lead in fighter trainer role and Egypt is now too considering responses to a request for proposals it issued in January. “We have received the RFP and we are work-



Dr Mehmet Demiroğlu

ing on a response, and as part of that effort we are here. By the end of the week, we hope to fly Egyptian Air Force pilots.”

“On the engine that will power the serial production aircraft we are waiting for our US friends, General Electric, which is supplying the serial production F404s, to get the export license. We are hopeful.”



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BIG AMBITIONS
Aselsan's GM Ahmet Akyol has ambitions to make it one of the biggest companies in the world

Turkey's Aselsan showing the way

In recent years Turkey's Aselsan has become one of the fastest growing companies in the world. Speaking at the show yesterday, general manager Ahmet Akyol puts it down to expanding business right across the defence sectors.

“We started our business with creating payloads like radar and EO/IR FLIRs for land, then jumped to naval, but the difficult one was to airborne and then space,” Akyol said

Today Aselsan's business covers six main areas - airborne radars, electronic warfare, electro-optical, communications, avionics and guidance kits. “We are showcasing our airborne ISR radars and electronic warfare capabilities like EW pods for F-16s, helicopters and unmanned aerial systems. Both TAI's Akuncjar and Bayraktar's TB2 UAS use our self-protection systems.

“We are the main supplier of electro-

optics to Turkish UAS, like the Aselsan 500 (ASELFLIR-500) high-performance new generation 15” electro-optical reconnaissance, surveillance and targeting system, which has been exported to four countries to date, and by the end of the year that could reach seven countries. It has many additional features compared to many – we can for example designate targets at 90 degrees on the ground.”

Communications is the fourth sector. “This is the second time we are showing our national Tactical datalink – T-Link a similar Link 16 national concept, includes IFF systems, radio systems, SATCOM systems etc.”

On avionics Aselsan supplies systems to the Hurjet and to the Turkish national fighter jet, Kaan as well as to modernised/upgraded helicopters. The sixth and most reason business sector is bomb guidance kits like the laser/INS guided bombs.

EDGE and Egypt

Omar Al Zaabi, President of Trading and Mission Support cluster for UAE's EDGE is responsible for looking after international sales for the group.

“For some capabilities, it requires long term development, while in the short term, building relationships with third party suppliers. We are trying to work closer with Egypt, and part of that strategy when it comes to international business is to find the right supplier in the country to work with.

“In Egypt for example we are trying to build a local relationship with Arab Organisation of Industrialisation (AOI) and we are defining what the scope of that could be – but we are always looking for the right partnership to build these relationships.”

Egypt could be a good market for EDGE, one of the largest countries in MENA and now both sides are striving to see how they could work together to build Egypt's military capabilities.



EDGE's Omar Al Zaabi, President of Trading and Mission Support cluster



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Egypt looks closely at its light attack options

Leonardo's M-346 joins two other contenders for the Egyptian light attack and lead in fighter trainer RFP

Military OEMs are at the show – keen to impress the Egyptian MOD with the capabilities of their respective light attack fighters. In January Egypt's MOD issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for 36 light attack fighter/lead in fighter trainers, with at least four companies responding. Three are here at the show.

China's CATIC has offered the L-15, Italy's Leonardo proposed the M346FA in tandem with the M345 Master, Korean Aerospace Industries (KAI) has put forward its FA-50/T-50 and Aero Vodochody is offering the L-39NG in both the trainer and light attack version.

Egypt plans to purchase the aircraft, but Arab Organisation for Industrialisation (AIO) based in Helwan would like any purchase to include the transfer of technology and local assembly. However, this would take time to set up, and Cairo is keen to acquire the aircraft as soon as possible according to one source. The other hurdle could be financing, and any deal is likely

to involve considerable support from the seller's banks.

The L-15 was quite surprisingly selected by the UAEAF&AD in 2021 to replace the MB 339s of the Al Fursan aerobatic team, 12 were ordered and there are another 36 as an option for the close air support role. While they are an outside bet, the cost wouldn't be such an issue backed up with Chinese financing.

The Leonardo M346FA is the fighter attack version of the successful M346 lead in fighter trainer, equipped with a Grifo radar but Leonardo is also offering the M-345 Master as a combined training mix that would reduce the cost of any purchase.

The only air force currently operating the M346FA is Turkmenistan with four M346FAs and two M346FT trainers. Leonardo has been very successful in the recent past with the sale of its A109 and AW149s to Egypt so there is certainly a good connection there.

KAI has sold the FA-50 to sev-



eral Asia Pacific countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines but quite importantly a NATO country too – Poland which also operates the M346.

Aero Vodochody is in the mix too with its L-39NG jet trainer and light attack version. The Vietnamese Air Force has 12 on order – six have been delivered, while Hungary has 12 on order and Czech training company, LOM Praha which trains Czech and African air force pilots is expected to receive two this month. Undoubtedly, with its ability to

house either western and eastern avionics and weapons, this would be a bonus for Egypt which works with both Russia and the West.

An outside bet is the Turkish Aerospace Industries supersonic Hurjet jet trainer which made its first flight in April 2023. Turkey and Egypt are now enjoying better relations than they did in the recent past. There are also plans to develop a light attack version, and TAI is currently on a major sales campaign, with Spain as well as Turkey interested.

French Rafale flies the flag

This French Air Force Dassault Rafale C resplendent in the colours of the French national flag, put in a very dynamic performance during yesterday's flying display. There have been some great export successes in the region of the multirole combat aircraft over the past decade and not too surprisingly the French are keen to see their colours over Egypt.



▲ NEWS IN BRIEF

New markets for first timers ST Engineering

ST Engineering Singapore is enjoying its first foray at an air show outside of Singapore. "We were invited by the Egyptian Air Force, so we couldn't say no," said Benjamin Kwan, director of international business, defence aerospace.

ST Engineering has a track record of over 685 aircraft redeliveries, over 1,260 T56 engines repaired and overhauled as well as over 2,000 components serviced annually. The company is at the show promoting its C-130 in the region – of which the Egyptian Air Force has over 20. It currently has two C-130 for the Tunisian Air Force in its hangar in Singapore.

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Nesma's hybrid carrier is dual purpose

Egyptian hybrid carrier Nesma Airlines intends to add more aircraft to its fleet next year, but investment beyond that will have to wait for the region's geopolitical situation to stabilise, the company's commercial director said.

Nesma operates both scheduled and charter services. Scheduled routes focus on Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Italy from Cairo and Upper Egyptian cities, while the charter flights bring in passengers from a variety of European nations. The company currently operates

eight Airbus A320ceo, with two more scheduled to arrive in 2025. Even achieving this small addition to fleet numbers was difficult, Amr Mokhlis said. "There's no availability in the market today."

The new aircraft will be used both to increase frequencies in existing markets and to open up new ones, such as Czechia, he said.

Traditionally, Egypt has supplied significant numbers of skilled workers such as doctors, engineers and teachers to Gulf nations, especially Saudi Arabia, and with



▲ Balancing act: Amr Mokhlis, Nesma's commercial director

this in mind Nesma operates to no fewer than eight points there, from Tabuk in the far southwest to Hail in the north.

Like many of the region's airlines, the current unrest caused an initial drop-off in business, especially on the charter side. This has now largely recovered, although some individual markets, such as Spain, remain difficult: "Ten aircraft are enough for us at the moment," Mokhlis said. "We're waiting for political events to calm down before we invest more."

Chapman Freeborn open for business



▲ Tapping into regional potential: Andrew Lester, BD consultant at Chapman Aviation Services

Cargo aircraft charter solutions provider Chapman Freeborn is looking for strategic partnerships at the show. The company, headquartered in Dubai, specialises in the charter and lease of aircraft for a wide-ranging customer base, including freight forwarders, multinational corporations, and governments, all over the world with heavy influence in the Middle East & Africa.

"At least 30 % our work is in Africa, but we want to further

expand as the region has so much potential," said Andrew Lester, BD consultant at Chapman Aviation Services.

"The infrastructure is lacking in Africa, but places like the UAE are throwing money to help it there. With the seasonality in the northern hemisphere, we can move our assets from the northern hemisphere to the southern. Africa is open for business, as are we, and we want to grow there which is why we're here at the EIAS."

The company, which was established in 1973, also works heavily with humanitarian agencies. "We are the number one preferred humanitarian cargo carrying company for the United Nations and World Food Programme," said Lester.

Chapman Freeborn is part of the Avia Solutions Group family, the world's largest ACMI (Aircraft, Crew, Maintenance, and Insurance) provider, with a fleet of 213 wide and narrow-body aircraft.

Xplora-ing its options

A new Italian engineering company specialising in the design of UAS for advanced applications is at the show highlighting its software.

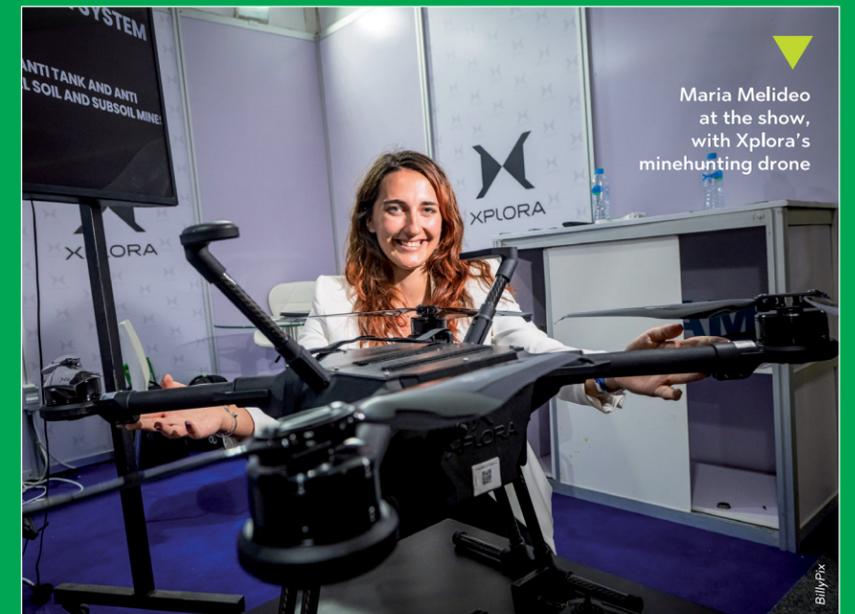
"We are transforming territorial analysis with artificial intelligence," said Xplora's Maria Melideo.

"Our advanced software, combined with high-precision sensors mounted on our drones offer an unprecedented understanding of structures and infrastructures, both above ground and underground," she said.

The company's leading product is its Remote Minehunting and Disposal Systems (RMDS), which is dedicated to mine detection activities in both defence and humanitarian sectors.

The company is only a year old but has already won a contract to provide the US Army with its mine detection product - with an order expected by the end of 2024.

"Obviously, the MENA and African regions are ideal for us to explore, which is why we are at the show" she said. "We are already having some really positive conversations, as well as interesting network opportunities. We basically are ready to open up internationally."



▼ Maria Melideo at the show, with Xplora's minehunting drone



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