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**NEW AIR SEYCHELLES
BOSS PLOTS THE
RECOVERY COURSE**

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TRACE LA VOIE DE LA REPRISE »

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COVER:
Captain Sandy Benoiton has taken over as Air Seychelles acting CEO at one of the most difficult times in history.
PICTURE: AIR SEYCHELLES

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Africa must seize this opportunity

There is no question that the recovery of the airline industry across the African continent will lag behind the rest of the world as the fight against Covid-19 continues.

The woeful lack of vaccine availability is at the heart of the problem, with only 4.2 vaccines per 100 people administered across Africa compared to 77 in North America and 76 in Europe.

African airline movements remain 80% down on pre-pandemic numbers, with many airlines limping along.

But this is the time that airlines, their governments, and their investors, must be looking carefully at what they do next.

Africa has been recognised as having “potential” and has been the “great opportunity” for the industry. Putting aside the huge global tourism attraction of the continent in so many different areas there is, of course, its own internal pan-continental possibilities.

At the recent African Airlines Association (AFRAA) event in September, Lufthansa Consulting warned that the industry just trying to carry on as it was before the pandemic would not wash in the new-normal. In 2019, Africa had 12% of the world’s population and yet had barely 2% of its airline business.

Lufthansa Consulting said this was, perhaps, not surprising as the businesses often faced a raft of problems including low capital resources, poor provision of airports

infrastructure, high lease rental of aircraft and equipment, high airport taxes and charges, poor navigational systems, low traffic made up of virtually empty airspaces, low propensity to travel by air, and lack of disposable income occasioned by the poverty of many African nations.

Tragically, too many nations have resorted to higher charges and taxes to meet the costs, thus making Africa the most expensive place in the world for the air transport industry.

But there is still opportunity. Africa has a young, digital savvy population. As we have seen in the telecommunications business, it has skipped generations of analogue to embrace the latest technology. This should be applied to aviation.

Rwanda, Ghana and Kenya have been pioneers with future air systems through drone delivery. Kenya Airways has been thinking ‘outside the box’ in its tie-up with Embraer for electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft (eVTOL) air transport for local and regional short flights.

Most importantly, we are seeing airlines like Kenya and Ethiopian pushing for consolidation and reducing the number of carriers, while sharing cost benefits.

If governments can do their part and create the right environment for transformation then, and only then, will Africa live up to its promise.

Alan Peaford, editor-in-chief



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United in Ghana Covid vaccine mission

In early September, United Airlines became the first US carrier to deliver Covid-19 vaccines to Ghana with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and global logistics

company, DSV. The airline flew more than a million doses from Washington Dulles to Accra's Kotoka International Airport for local distribution.

PICTURE: UNITED AIRLINES

New date for Aviation Africa

Aviation Africa 2021, due to take place on October 14-15 in Kigali, Rwanda, has been postponed, and will now take place at the same venue (the Radisson Blu Hotel & Convention Centre) on September 15-16 2022.

Organisers of the major aerospace and defence trade event have taken the decision based on the increased cases of the Covid-19 delta variant across the African continent. They hope, that by moving to 2022, the event can transition to safer times when global travel confidence is back.

Mark Brown, managing director, Times Aerospace, said: "Rwanda has been one of the countries globally that has put in place a very secure Covid protection plan with strict entry and exit requirements and we remain extremely confident that we shall be holding Aviation Africa there next year."

ERJ 145 to Mwant

UK-based Skyworld Aviation has announced the sale of a second ERJ 145 aircraft to Mwant Jet of the Democratic



Bell rings up first 505 for Ethiopia

Bell Textron has delivered a Bell 505 helicopter to WA Oil Factory and Distribution in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, its first corporate customer in the country.

The aircraft was initially delivered to one of Bell's independent representatives for Africa, Africair's Bell customer service facility (CSF) in Nairobi, Kenya, where it was re-assembled and hangered until its ferry flight to Addis Ababa Bole International Airport.

WA Oil pilot, Captain Gilbert Gitonga, said: "The 505 has plenty of power and is operating extremely well."

Republic of Congo. Both aircraft previously operated in the UK.

The latest jet was transferred to Kinshasa on September 3.

A Skyworld spokesperson said: "We are pleased to continue our relationship with Mwant Jet, which has its operational base in Kinshasa. Both ERJ 145s will fly alongside corporate aircraft serving mining contracts, charter services, and government contracts, as well as scheduled services."

Joining forces

RwandAir and Qatar Airways have forged a new partnership. As part of the strategic agreement, the extensive interline agreement will give customers access to the networks of both airlines spanning 160 destinations.

Yvonne Makolo, RwandAir CEO, said: "Delivering excellent customer experience is key for us and we know that any traveller flying with Qatar Airways or RwandAir, as

part of the agreement, will continue to receive the same unrivalled level of service that they're used to from both airlines."

Kenya e-winner

Kenya Airways has been named best in the e-commerce travel and tourism category at this year's Kenya E-commerce Awards.

The airline has continued to reinforce its digital strategy and approach to modernise and customise its air travel experiences. The

carrier has scaled products and services available on the website, including the enhanced booking experience, a revamped mobile application, the digitisation of health and travel requirements, and its chatbot service.

Space for new ideas

Ethiopian Airlines Group has unveiled a new digital option dubbed MyShebaSpace that enables economy-class travellers to purchase one or more empty seats on board to get extra space.

Ethiopian Group CEO, Tewolde GebreMariam, said: "Whatever we do to make people comfortable flying again is a manifestation of our desire to stay up, to offer better, and to be at the fore [of our industry]."

Air Tanzania milestone

Air Tanzania has taken delivery of the last new-build DHC-8-Q400 to roll off the De Havilland Aircraft of Canada production line. The airline currently operates one DHC-8-Q300, four other Dash 8-Q400s, two A220-300s, and two B787-8s.



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Take-off date for SAA return

South Africa Airways was set to take to the skies again as *African Aerospace* was going to press.

The airline entered business rescue, similar to a Chapter 11 restructuring process, in December 2019. Flights have been grounded since September 2020.

The airline was targeting a September 23 relaunch date.

Services resumed

South African low-cost carrier, Comair, resumed operations on September 1.

The airline, which operates kulula.com and British Airways (operated by Comair), temporarily suspended services on July 5 in response to the implementation of an adjusted Covid-19 level 4 lockdown, the prohibition of all non-essential travel in and out of Gauteng province, and low demand for air travel.

British Airways (operated by Comair) will re-launch its Johannesburg/Mauritius route, operating two flights a week from November 30.

Somaliland boost

Flydubai has begun a three-times-weekly service to Somaliland capital, Hargeisa.

Ghaith Al Ghaith, CEO at Flydubai, said: "We are pleased to restart our operations to Egal International Airport, which will provide the Somali diaspora with a convenient option to visit their families and friends in their home country.

"With our codeshare agreement with Emirates and the interline agreements we have in place, more than 200 destinations can now be reached through Dubai's aviation hub."



Air Senegal arrives in Baltimore

An Air Senegal Airbus A330-900neo lands at Thurgood Marshall Baltimore-Washington International Airport after the carrier inaugurated its new route between Dakar and New York / Baltimore on September 2.

Air Senegal will be maintaining its original twice-weekly flights to the USA, operated in conjunction with HiFly.

The airline said: "It is a step forward in the development of Air Senegal's network, despite the difficult context of the Covid-19 pandemic."

PICTURE: SHUTTERSTOCK

Maiden flight

Cally Air conducted its maiden commercial flight using a B737-300 from Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Lagos, to Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja.

Welcoming the first arrival, Ben Ayade, governor of Nigeria's Cross River State, said: "My strong conviction is that Cally Air is the beginning of the process of

actually creating a private sector that never existed before. It is also the beginning of creating an alternative economy that never existed in Cross River state."

Air Cairo expands

Air Cairo has taken delivery of two A320-200neos from commercial aviation financing and leasing company, GECAS.

The aircraft expand on the Egypt-based low-cost

carrier's current fleet of seven A320s.

Silky move

Azerbaijani cargo airline, Silk Way West Airlines, has signed an interline agreement with Kenya's Astral Aviation.

Silk Way West Airlines will carry shipments from Baku to Dubai before handing over to Astral's flight to Nairobi. Freight will also flow in the opposite direction.

Get connected

Emirates has signed an interline agreement with South African carrier, CemAir, that opens up connections to six more African destinations through the airline's gateways of Johannesburg and Cape Town.

New airline launch

Africa Airlines began services on August 21, shortly after having secured its air operator's certificate (AOC) from the Republic of Congo. The service currently has multiple daily rotations between Brazzaville Maya-Maya International Airport (the airline's hub) and Pointe Noire.

Data on the menu

Argentine company Satellogic, a specialist in sub-metre resolution satellite imagery collection, is partnering up with GeoTerraImage, the geospatial solutions provider in southern Africa.

GeoTerraImage will leverage Satellogic's high-resolution multispectral satellite data and low-latency hyperspectral data for large-scale agriculture management, to help the continent develop new food systems and food-security solutions.

Kenya Airways hub a springboard for innovation

Kenya Airways has launched the Fahari Innovation Hub, a centre for innovation that acts as a springboard for new ideas that address societal and business challenges.

The hub is part of the airline's strategy in contributing to the sustainable development of Africa by empowering and partnering with local start-ups and SMEs.

Kenya Airways chief executive officer, Allan Kilavuka, said: "At the pace at which change accelerates, we have become increasingly aware of the need to be innovative as we position the business as a resilient, forward-looking and sustainable company with a deliberate inclusive agenda of empowering, partnering and co-creating with the society around us."



Sign of the times: Allan Kilavuka (right) and Roy Sasaka Telewa, chief executive officer at the National Youth Council, one of the hub's partners.

PICTURE: KENYA AIRWAYS.

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“Moving from a fixed schedule of operation to ad hoc services was not an easy process.”
CAPTAIN SANDY BENOITON

Can Sandy pilot Seychelles through the travelling storm?

Captain Sandy Benoiton has taken over as Air Seychelles acting CEO at one of the most difficult times in history. He talked to Anuradha Deenapanray Chappard about the airline's development strategy and its fight against Covid-19.

Things changed for Air Seychelles this summer after Etihad Airways relinquished its 40% stake in the company and a new acting CEO was appointed.

The Seychelles took full ownership of its flag-carrier, having reached an agreement with the United Arab Emirates carrier to sell its interest – held since 2012 – for a substantial discount.

Captain Sandy Benoiton, a Seychelles citizen who has worked for the national carrier for two decades and was formerly director of operations, was subsequently appointed acting CEO by the archipelago's ministry of transport.

Even though he has the difficult task to pilot Air Seychelles during a complicated period, he's prepared to meet this huge challenge with a solid recovery plan, a resilient, hardworking, agile and determined team, and the full support of the government.

The aim is for the airline to remain a pillar of the tourism industry, the archipelago's strongest economic sector.

“Our recovery plan is to focus on

opportunities within the flying range of our fuel-efficient A320neo aircraft and to seek the best deal to recuperate the revenue foregone during non-operational times,” explained Benoiton. “We will also continue to implement cost-benefit initiatives across the business to increase efficiency and service delivery.”

Due to the sudden decline in travel in 2020, including border closures across the airline's network, Air Seychelles had to quickly change its business model to focus on operating cargo and repatriation charter flights, as well as its normal commercial passenger services, to remain sustainable.

“Moving from a fixed schedule of operation to ad hoc services was not an easy process,” admitted Benoiton. “However, today we are all proud at Air Seychelles to say that, at the time when travel was almost at a standstill in the Indian Ocean, we flew to more than 40 new destinations across the globe, connecting stranded families, loved ones, friends and

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

colleagues, in addition to delivering essential cargo services.”

Air Seychelles is combatting the Covid-19 crisis by constantly adjusting its operations, while ensuring safety throughout the process.

“We have ensured that all health protocols requested by each destination country have been followed. The process was not easy at first as countries kept changing their Covid-19 requirements based on their rate of infection. Crews had to adapt,” said Benoiton.

By mid-August, commercial services had resumed to specific markets, while charter services on demand were ongoing. The airline had operated 23 charter flights covering 10 new destinations, including Perth and Sydney in Australia for the first time.

The archipelago was the first in the region to reopen its borders after pioneering an efficient vaccination campaign.

“The opening of the Seychelles in March was, indeed, great news for us as it was an opportunity to tap into markets beyond our usual network to build revenue,” said Benoiton.

Consequently, Air Seychelles was the first airline globally to introduce a preferential ‘entry fee’ to all travellers having received two doses of vaccine.

According to Benoiton, this measure has also enabled the airline to explore selected routes with similar entry requirements as part of its strategy when evaluating a particular destination.

In March, the airline launched a seasonal service to Dubai while, in April, its A320neo flew to Bucharest, establishing a direct link with Romania to carry passengers to the Seychelles as part of a chartered operation.

Since 2018, the airline has been implementing a transformation plan after losses, mainly from



Up and away: The archipelago was the first in the region to reopen its borders after pioneering an efficient vaccination campaign.

PICTURE: AIR SEYCHELLES

flying long-haul routes. It decided to abandon certain intercontinental markets, such as Paris, replaced its Airbus SE A330 aircraft with smaller A320 jets, and focused on its regional network.

It is gradually now resuming its regional and its international routes.

As part of its scheduled operations, Air Seychelles is operating weekly flights from Tel Aviv in addition to the twice-weekly direct flights from Johannesburg to the Maldives. It is planning to resume scheduled flights to Mauritius this month after a shut-off of a year-and-a-half

“At the moment, due to ongoing health restrictions, we are not operating flights from South Africa and India to the Seychelles. However, ongoing monitoring will continue on this route to ensure we resume services to these destinations as soon as the restrictions are lifted,” explained Benoiton.

Winning three major accolades, including the coveted title of ‘Indian Ocean’s leading airline’ at

the virtual World Travel Awards in 2020, has built up Air Seychelles’ confidence.

“These awards showcase the continued support of our guests and partners in bringing the airline to greater heights,” said Benoiton.

According to the Seychelles State Secretary for Finance, Patrick Payet, when Etihad sold its stake in Air Seychelles, the country obtained a 79% discount on the total debt (around \$11 million instead of \$72 million).

However, Etihad’s departure may not be the end of alliances. In the aftermath of the pandemic, Indian Ocean airlines will, no doubt, need to cooperate efficiently and find synergies or strategic partnerships to sustain their restart and eventual growth, and strengthen intra-regional connectivity.

“Air Seychelles is open to working with like-minded partners sharing a similar vision and strategy to that of the airline,” concluded Benoiton. ■

SOMMAIRE

Une nouvelle ère s’ouvre à Air Seychelles

Air Seychelles a été renationalisée après un accord signé avec Etihad. Son nouveau DG, le Capitaine Sandy Benoiton a présenté la stratégie de développement de la compagnie pour consolider sa connectivité régionale à Anuradha Deenapanray Chappard.

« Le plan de relance d’Air Seychelles consiste à saisir les opportunités dans le rayon de vol de ses A320neo, des appareils à faible consommation de carburant, pour rechercher les meilleurs moyens de compenser les pertes de revenus subies pendant les périodes non opérationnelles. La compagnie aérienne continuera également à mettre en œuvre des initiatives coûts-bénéfices sur l’ensemble de ses activités pour accroître son efficacité et améliorer ses services », affirme le Capitaine Benoiton.

Face à la chute précipitée du trafic aérien en 2020, Air Seychelles a dû modifier son modèle économique pour se concentrer le fret et les vols de rapatriement en plus des services commerciaux pour rester durable.

En 2020, alors que le trafic était presque à l’arrêt dans l’océan Indien, Air Seychelles a assuré les services de fret essentiels de même que la liaison vers plus de 40 nouvelles destinations à travers le

monde, connectant des familles bloquées, des proches, des amis et des collègues.

À la mi-août, les services commerciaux avaient repris vers des marchés spécifiques tout comme les services d’affrètement à la demande. La compagnie aérienne avait déjà opéré 23 vols charters couvrant 10 nouvelles destinations, y compris Perth et Sydney pour la première fois.

□ □ □ □ □

L’archipel a été le premier à rouvrir ses frontières après une campagne de vaccination efficace. Ainsi, la compagnie a pu sonder des marchés au-delà de son réseau habituel pour générer des revenus.

Par conséquent, Air Seychelles a été la première compagnie aérienne au monde à introduire un tarif d’entrée préférentiel à tous les voyageurs avec un schéma vaccinal complet.

En mars, Air Seychelles a lancé un service

saisonnier vers Dubaï tandis qu’en avril l’A320neo a établi une liaison directe avec la Roumanie pour une opération charter.

La compagnie aérienne reprend progressivement ses services régionaux et internationaux. Dans le cadre de ses opérations régulières, Air Seychelles assure des vols hebdomadaires de Tel-Aviv vers les Seychelles en plus de deux vols hebdomadaires directs de Johannesburg aux Maldives. Les vols réguliers vers Maurice reprendront à partir du 3 octobre prochain après 18 mois d’arrêt.

« Pour le moment, en raison des restrictions sanitaires, la compagnie aérienne n’opère pas de vol depuis l’Afrique du Sud et l’Inde vers les Seychelles. Toutefois, nous suivons l’évolution de la situation et reprendront nos services dès la levée des restrictions. »

Selon lui, « Air Seychelles est prête à travailler avec des partenaires partageant sa vision et sa stratégie ». ■


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 **into life**

Why Stander opted to

*Wrenelle Stander has had a stellar career in aviation and corporate management. It was, therefore, a coup for the Airline Association of Southern Africa (AASA) when they managed to recruit her as CEO, starting in July 2021. But, less than two months after getting her feet under her desk, she unexpectedly announced that she was leaving – to take up a job at Wesgro in Cape Town. **Guy Leitch** gets the inside story on this unexpected move.*

Wesgro has been an extraordinary success as the agency tasked to mobilise investment in the Western Cape Province of South Africa.

In particular, Wesgro's cape air access initiative (CAAI) has been – up until the Covid-19 lockdown – a fantastic leap forward, and an example of how important air connectivity is to a region's growth.

Stander has had a tumultuous few years. Before accepting the position of CEO at AASA, she had been the CEO of Comair, the operator of the British Airways' franchise in South Africa and low-cost carrier, kulula.com.

She had joined Comair in a perfect storm – the airline's fleet expansion was based on the Boeing 737MAX and then, within a year of the aircraft's grounding, Covid hit.

In May 2020, the carrier was forced into Business Rescue (the South African equivalent of the US Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection) and she had the unhappy task of steering the mortally wounded airline into its first loss and, finally, an ownership takeover.



Stander left Comair at the end of December 2020 and soon a number of suitors were beating a path to her door with job offers. She accepted the position of AASA CEO to replace the long-serving Chris Zweigenthal, who was retiring.

As a natural leader with a unique skills set, she said: "Finding the sweet spot in the nexus between government and industry is the thread that has strung together my various roles in the energy and aviation industries and one that is crucial to the vital role that the air transport industry fulfils."

It was this keen appreciation of the key role of the airline industry in enabling broad economic growth that enticed Stander to move across to Wesgro. "The prospect of joining Wesgro and taking overall accountability for positioning the Western Cape as one of the world's leading regional economies is very stimulating. Joining Wesgro will allow me a challenging, yet exciting, opportunity to plough back into the economy of the city where I was born," she said.

Stander has deep roots in the Western Cape. "I was born in Diep River in Cape Town and

PICTURE: AASA



Joining Wesgro will allow me a challenging, yet exciting, opportunity to plough back into the economy of the city where I was born.

WRENELLE STANDER

completed primary, secondary, as well as my tertiary education there. After 28 years of studying and working in Oxford, Pretoria, and Johannesburg, I will be returning back home, to where my family still lives."

When asked what attracted her enough to make the jump to Wesgro she said: "One of the biggest attractions for me is the platform Wesgro provides to make a difference to the lives of people who live and work in the Western Cape. Wesgro has a fine reputation and has done really great work in attracting and retaining direct investment in the Western Cape; facilitating the growth of exports; as well as positioning and marketing the province as a competitive and sustainable tourism and film destination globally."

Having operated at the top level in government, the aviation regulator and the private sector, Stander has a unique set of skills. She began her career in the department of transport, where she rose to become chief director of aviation and maritime regulation and also served as deputy CEO of the SA Civil Aviation Authority.

She then became the managing director of South Africa's Air Traffic Navigation Service (ATNS) and, subsequently, the multinational Sasol Gas business. She has held executive and non-executive directorships on many boards.

She said: "Finding the sweet spot in the nexus between government and industry is the thread that has strung together my various roles in the energy and aviation industries. I will certainly be

become a Cape crusader

able to leverage these skills to the full extent.

“Wesgro is uniquely positioned to provide a link between the public and private sector to collaborate and ensure that the Western Cape economy is one of the world’s leading regional economies.”

Perhaps the biggest loser in the sudden maelstrom has been the AASA. The job was also one that would be able to best use Stander’s skill set.

When she took the job she said: “Most analysts concur that the global industry will emerge from the Covid-19 crisis with smaller and fewer airlines.

“In Africa, the drivers for air travel and air freight are more fundamental and remain undiminished by the crisis – population growth and large distances between markets, often characterised by hostile terrain, with few navigable rivers, no long-distance rapid rail network and bottlenecks at land frontiers. We want to work with governments and industry to address those needs in a way that is economically, socially, commercially and environmentally sustainable.”

CEO with a stellar career

Wrenelle Stander has had a stellar career in industry, government para-statals and the airline sector.

Prior to joining AASA, she held a range of enterprise-level leadership positions within the South African Civil Aviation Authority and energy industries, including having been chief executive officer - Comair Limited (owner of low-cost-carrier, kulula.com and the BA franchise), and managing director of Sasol Gas.

In government, she has been the managing director of South Africa’s Air Traffic and Navigation Services Company (ATNS) and she has also served as deputy CEO of the South African Civil Aviation Authority.

Prior to joining AASA as an executive director, she was elected as chair of the board.

She has an MBA from Oxford Brookes University in the UK and a BA (Hons) from the University of Cape Town.

Now, about her sudden job switch, she said:

“Leaving AASA was never going to be easy. I will miss AASA’s wonderful team of people. Fortunately, I will still be working very closely with them, as well as colleagues in the aviation industry.”

One of Wesgro’s biggest success stories has been the CAAI. This is expected to be the project where she will be able to add most value. She said: “The initiative focuses on broadening the Western Cape’s international air access and growing the tourism sector, which is largely built on international visitors.”

Since it began in 2015, the CAAI has launched 16 new air routes direct to Cape Town and facilitated more than 20 route expansions. This has more than doubled seat capacity at Cape Town International Airport, adding almost two million two-way seats to the Cape Town network and contributing and estimated R9 billion (\$632 million) in direct tourism spend.

Stander will join Wesgro after handing over to her successor at AASA.



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Stop start: Cabo Verde Airlines' Boeing 757s were returning from storage in the US and were about to restart services when the government decided to renationalise the airline.

PICTURE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Renationalisation row rocks Cabo Verde Airlines

Uncertainty surrounds the future of Cabo Verde Airlines after the African archipelago's government decided to renationalise the carrier.
Alan Dron
reports.

Just two years after the Cabo Verde Government agreed to hand control of 51% of TACV Cabo Verde Airlines to Loftleidir Cabo Verde, a subsidiary of charter and ACMI specialist Loftleidir Icelandic, the administration has reversed its decision.

In a move that took the airline's management completely by surprise, the country's council of ministers announced that Loftleidir's stake would be repurchased, "to ensure the normal resumption of the flag-carrier's activities, essential for the development of Cape Verde".

A government statement added: "It is imperative that the State of Cape Verde, in the name of the national public interest, intervenes with the utmost urgency in order to ensure the existence and normal resumption of the activities of TACV, Sal Airport," arguing that the state would only be able to do so by resuming control of the airline.

The precise meaning of this statement, or why the government apparently feared that the Icelandic management was not capable of bringing back the airline from a lengthy pause enforced by the pandemic, is not clear.

The government did not respond to enquiries from *African Aerospace* for the reasons behind the decision.

Its decision was all the more odd given that, in spring 2021, the government had been proposing to sell off its remaining shareholding. This was one of a series of structural reforms by the government as a condition for International Monetary Fund (IMF) financial support to the archipelago.

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Loftleidir Cabo Verde said it contested the government's decision to renationalise the carrier. It said that it was analysing the situation before issuing a more formal response, adding that its management had seen the airline's financial situation improve before the onset of the pandemic

"Loftleidir Cabo Verde reiterates that it has assumed all commitments since the acquisition of shares in 2019 and, under the new management, achieved a significant growth

of the airline of more than 130%, with the creation of an international hub in Sal linking Europe and South America and, later, west Africa and North America.

"Since acquiring the majority of shares, the financial performance of the airline has improved considerably, achieving revenues of CVE 6.755.905 (\$72,000) in 2019."

The airline's Boeing 757s were stored in the US after the Cape Verde Government halted flights to and from the islands in spring 2020 as an anti-Covid measure.

The airline said that, in March, the government and Loftleidir Cabo Verde had reached an agreement for the company's financial reorganisation, with the aim of relaunching its operations.

This included the appointment of a governmental representative as vice-president treasury within the airline, "with the objective of overseeing application of funds and the payment of debts".

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The airline added that the government had failed to honour the agreement, with its representative having blocked several scheduled payments, "including the mandatory tax and social security contributions, as well as payments to other state entities and service providers, despite appeals by the management and the airline's executive committee".

This situation led to a lawsuit by the state-owned operator of Cabo Verde's Sal Airport and the impounding of one of the airline's aircraft.

The airline noted that it did not own the aircraft and what it described as "this illegal action by the state" had damaged the airline and led to further deterioration in its finances.

The company added that Loftleidir Cabo Verde and the airline's management team had learned "with absolute surprise" of the government's decision to renationalise the airline.

"Loftleidir Cabo Verde is analysing its rights and what legal means it has available to reverse this nationalization and be compensated for the damage caused by this action of the Cape Verdean state," it said.

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Versatile: The Grand Caravans operate into short strips dotted around Botswana. Left: New scheduled services to Victoria Falls have proved popular.

PICTURES: MACK AIR.

MACK BACKS A GRAND NEW FLEET

Having ordered Africa's largest batch of Cessna Grand Caravans, Botswana's Mack Air is ready for a post-pandemic upswing in traffic. Alan Dron reports.

When well-heeled tourists disembark from their Boeing 737s and Embraer E-Jets at Maun Airport for the final leg of their journeys to Botswana's game lodges, the aircraft to which they transfer are almost certainly the smallest on which they have ever flown.

That can create some nervousness among travellers. Mack Air's managing director, Michael Weyl, and his staff are well aware of this phenomenon. That's one reason behind their decision to acquire no fewer than 17 Cessna Grand Caravan EXs.

"Reaction to the aircraft has been excellent," said Weyl. "It's all about bringing confidence to travel. Safety, efficiency and comfort is our goal."

Another factor behind the re-fleeting was the modernisation of many of the game lodges. "We felt it was time we bit the bullet and brought the same level of service in aviation as the lodges were offering in accommodation."

Before the infusion of new metal, Mack Air operated a heterogeneous fleet of earlier Caravans, Kodiaks, GA-8 Airvans, and a variety of smaller Cessnas. Some passengers balked.

"When they climb off their airliner at Maun and the Caravan is probably the smallest aircraft they've flown on, you can imagine what they thought when they saw the Cessna 206," said Weyl.

While the Grand Caravan is still small compared to an Airbus A320, "You can see that level of confidence in the passengers when they know it's a new aircraft. It's a huge selling point, especially when they visit neighbouring countries and travel in Cessna 206s and 210s."

The Grand Caravan's air-conditioning is another plus point, said Weyl, especially in October/November when temperatures climb to 40-45C in the shade. "The better on-board conditions mean that we've reduced sick bag usage considerably!"

The fleet has shrunk from 32 aircraft a couple of years ago to 21 today (the 17 Grand Caravans, two Airvans, a single Cessna 210 and a Cessna Citation M2 business jet), but the larger Grand Caravans mean that capacity is the same as the old fleet.

The two remaining Airvans are often used for cargo flights, while the Citation, based in Johannesburg for VIP and business charters, is the busiest aircraft in the entire fleet, said Weyl. With the pandemic still a factor, the Citation is in considerable demand: "People feel safer flying as a family or a small group."

Tourism is one of Botswana's three main revenue earners and 2019 was its best-ever year. Naturally, that all changed with the arrival of Covid. "Tourism in 2020 was at 1.78% of 2019 levels. International tourism went to zero. We had to start looking at other options," said Weyl.

Those options included government flights, plus work for the mining industry (diamonds are another of the country's big earners) and scheduled international services, notably from Kasani to Victoria Falls.

All of those have meant that Mack Air is emerging from the pandemic in reasonable shape.

Services from Maun, Botswana's second city, to game lodges in areas such as the Okavango Delta, involve sectors as short as 10 minutes. A typical routing can mean anything from four to 11 sectors.

"We've come out of 2020 extremely strong and well-prepared. We're looking at bigger aircraft. We're in talks with Textron Aviation, looking at the new Cessna SkyCourier. That could be extremely useful and could exactly fit our operation," said Weyl.

The SkyCourier is in flight-test and is a twin-turboprop that can carry either 19 passengers or three LD3 cargo containers. "It's an extremely versatile aircraft for what we would need in Botswana."

And the future? Weyl sees the company stepping up its operations, particularly to airstrips in the Okavango.

"The delta was high-cost, low-volume tourism. The lodges started changing strategy, bringing in more lodgers and expanding. The more beds in the delta, the more visitors they need to find." That augurs well for companies like Mack Air. ■



Bigger option: Auric Air's investment in a DHC Dash 8-100, with a second likely to appear next year, takes the 20-year-old airline to new levels.

PICTURE: AURIC AIR

Dash 8 takes Auric to a higher plane

Tanzania's Auric Air, for many years a specialist Cessna Grand Caravan operator, is taking a step up with its first full-size airliner. Alan Dron reports.

Twenty years after it started plying air routes over east Africa, Auric Air has moved up a couple of rungs in the aircraft size ladder.

Launching new services with its first De Havilland Aircraft of Canada Dash 8-100, the 37-seat twin turboprop marks a new chapter in the carrier's existence.

The Dash 8-100 was acquired from the Avmax Group of Canada. Built in 1999, it is one of the last -100s produced.

"We want to add more capacity on the routes we operate at the moment," explained Auric Air's managing director, Nurmohamed Hussein.

Many of the company's services involve picking up arriving international passengers from major international airports for onward connections to game lodges or national parks. Nairobi is a favoured entry point for tourists wanting to go on safari and, until now, the company's Grand Caravans have flown them to airstrips up-country. There is also a network of routes between national parks in nations such as Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda.

As the airline beds in the new aircraft it anticipates operating it initially between Zanzibar and the Serengeti National Park, either direct or via Arusha.

The Canadian aircraft may bring several advantages. "Once we're more comfortable with the Dash 8 and putting it on to some of those routes, it will reduce the cost per seat for passengers and that will, hopefully, bring more people," explained Hussein.

Additionally, it will potentially allow Auric Air to extend its working day: "In Tanzania, we're not allowed to operate

maintaining business throughout the Covid-19 emergency.

The pandemic saw many wealthy travellers flying into east Africa on business jets as a health measure, explained Hussein: "The number of private jets coming into Tanzania increased significantly."

And Auric Air's charter business also increased as people who could afford it hired one of the company's 14 Grand Caravans for families or small groups, to minimise the chance of infection.

The Tanzanian Government imposed no restrictions on travel, which allowed the country's vital tourist trade – much of it high-end – to continue: "Last year, from September to December, the whole world was pretty much shut down but Tanzania was open and Turks and Russians were still travelling," said Hussein.

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Tanzania's airport infrastructure is also improving, which may make it more attractive in relation to neighbouring countries. A new terminal at Dar es Salaam and "a really nice terminal building under construction" at Auric Air's Mwanza base will help the airline's prospects. Many of the airfields into which the company's aircraft operate are rough dirt strips, "but they're taken care of".

Until recently, the company filled gaps in the country's route network where national carrier, Air Tanzania, did not fly. However, the state-owned airline has embarked on a major re-fleeting and expansion programme and is now operating into more of the country's airports, which has an effect on Auric Air. When Air Tanzania started to fly into the capital, Dodoma, for example, the smaller airline stepped back.

Auric Air is already in discussions with Avmax for a second Dash 8-100 to ensure the timetable can be maintained in the event of the first aircraft going unserviceable or being hangered for maintenance.

"We have no choice but to get one more Dash 8 because we definitely need a back-up aircraft," said Hussein. "It would be a huge embarrassment if the original aircraft has a tech problem or is out on maintenance."

The second aircraft may appear in 2022. ■

Workhorse: FlyWestaf is proposing to launch domestic passenger services with a fleet of De Havilland Dash 8 Q400s.

PICTURE: FLYWESTAF



FLYWESTAF EYES UP ALGERIAN LCC MARKET

FlyWestaf is hoping to bring much-needed competition to the domestic Algerian market, before setting its sights further afield in west Africa.

Martin Rivers
reports.



Chakib Ziani Cherif: "It is a first in Algeria – a large market that is opening."

PICTURE: FLYWESTAF

FlyWestaf moved a step closer to becoming Algeria's first low-cost carrier on August 18, when its application for an air operator's certificate (AOC) was formally received by the country's civil aviation authority.

The start-up is headed by co-founders, Chakib Ziani Cherif and Richard Powell, who are proposing to launch domestic passenger services with a fleet of De Havilland Dash 8 Q400s.

Capital city, Algiers, will be the airline's main operating base, with a secondary hub also being established in Tamanrasset, an oasis city in the far south of Algeria.

Longer-term, the business plan envisages subsidiaries or franchises being set up across west Africa – initially focusing on Gambia, the former British colony that has been without a domestic airline since 2014.

Algerian president, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, has repeatedly called for more competition in the civil aviation sector since taking office two years ago.

The Algerian market is currently dominated by two state-owned airlines: flag-carrier Air Algérie, which has a poor reputation with customers owing to its low service standards and frequent delays; and Tassili Airlines, which began life as a charter carrier for oil workers and has struggled to diversify beyond this niche.

Former transport minister, Lazhar Hani, announced plans for a new, privately owned domestic airline in October 2020. Although he was fired by the president three months later over a procurement scandal, the ministry remains committed to the project.

Talks were held between government officials and "a dozen potential investors" in July, according to local media. FlyWestaf is the only company to have subsequently disclosed an AOC application.

However, despite being the front-runner in the liberalisation of Algeria's skies, things haven't gone smoothly for the start-up.

Management originally planned to launch operations in May 2021 in Gambia, having won the apparent backing of that country's president, Adama Barrow.

An initial route network of eight destinations was announced for the Banjul base: Abidjan (Ivory Coast); Bamako (Mali); Bissau (Guinea-Bissau); Conakry (Guinea); Dakar (Senegal); Freetown (Sierra Leone); Monrovia (Liberia); and Praia (Cape Verde).

Chartering larger aircraft for flights to western Europe was also on the agenda. Gambia's tourism sector has been heavily dependent on European leisure carrier TUI since the collapse of Gambia Bird, the former flag-carrier, in 2014.

As well as deferring its Gambian project, FlyWestaf has significantly altered its plans for the upcoming Algerian unit. The company originally intended to use the coastal city of Oran as a secondary hub, deploying aircraft to five domestic and four international markets. The overseas routes were expected to be Alicante and Barcelona in Spain; and Toulouse and Montpellier in France.

Tamanrasset has now replaced Oran as the planned satellite hub – likely due to the government's decision to initially grant only domestic flying rights.

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"We are on the verge of having a provisional authorisation for [our] AOC after our meeting with the Algerian minister of transport," Cherif said. "It is a first in Algeria – a large market that is opening [up to competition]. Of course, our strategy in west Africa is not forgotten. Precisely, it's a unique opportunity to link the two markets ... from Tamanrasset in a second phase."

Launching operations in the midst of the airline industry's worst ever downturn might seem like an extraordinary gamble. But management appear confident that times of crises offer the greatest opportunities. Cherif points to historically low leasing rates for aircraft amid an ongoing supply glut, as well as tentative signs of a recovery in global travel this summer.

He also believes that the economic hardships created by the Covid-19 pandemic will motivate African governments to push forward with long-overdue reforms to their civil aviation sectors – specifically, by replacing wasteful legacy flag-carriers with more cost-effective budget airlines.

That is likely to strike a chord with President Tebboune, who has vowed to rid Algeria of its reputation for public-sector bureaucracy and inefficiency.

What is not clear is whether FlyWestaf has secured the necessary funding to make good on its promises. Management have been seeking investment of \$9.2 million to get off the ground – about one-third of which they expect to come from Algeria's state-run National Investment Fund. ■



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SIMB AIRLINES DÉPLOIE SES AILES

Au cœur de la forêt équatoriale d'Afrique Centrale, un nouvel opérateur d'aviation d'affaires, Simb Airlines, a officiellement lancé ses opérations le 27 avril dernier.

Un reportage de Romuald Ngueyap.

La République Centrafricaine qui renoue progressivement avec la stabilité et un environnement propice à l'investissement, a vu l'envol d'une nouvelle compagnie, Simb Airlines. Ce projet est porté par l'homme d'affaires et trader camerounais, Emile Parfait Simb. Il est le président de Simb Group et à la tête de la société Global Investment Trading SA, spécialisée dans la cryptomonnaie.

Emile Parfait Simb a confié la direction générale de la compagnie au commandant Jacques Assoumou, pilote de ligne de nationalité gabonaise.

Ce dernier était auparavant directeur de l'exploitation chez Trans Air Congo (TAC), une compagnie privée congolaise basée à Pointe Noire.

Simb Airlines opère actuellement depuis son hub de Bangui, un Beechcraft King Air 200 d'une capacité de 6 passagers VIP.

« Nous sommes en voie d'acquérir deux ERJ145 (50 passagers) à court terme. Nous comptons évoluer sur des avions avec plus de capacité d'ici deux à trois ans », soutient Jacques Assoumou.

Simb Airlines propose des vols privés et à la demande, couvrant des villes de la sous-région à savoir Douala, Ndjamena, Libreville, Brazzaville Pointe Noire.

Un développement est prévu à terme vers les marchés en l'Afrique de l'Ouest et de l'Est. « Des contrats sont établis dans la sous-région en vue de partenariats. »

Simb Airlines arrive dans un contexte assez particulier marqué par la crise sanitaire qui a fortement perturbée le transport aérien à l'échelle mondiale. Mais cela ne freine en rien la volonté de la compagnie. « Le pari est effectivement risqué, mais c'est un réel challenge pour nous. Dans cet environnement, nous travaillons avec des effectifs réduits mais très professionnels pour minimiser les coûts de fonctionnement et d'exploitation. »

Être une compagnie aérienne opérant dans un pays « blacklisted » par l'Union européenne est une source de pression positive », précise Jacques Assoumou. « Une politique de rigueur sur le plan de la sûreté et de la bonne gouvernance, c'est la condition sine qua none pour réussir dans ce secteur extrêmement compétitif ».

Le marché de l'aviation d'affaires est encore embryonnaire en Afrique Centrale. Pour le DG de Simb Airlines, il s'agit là d'une opportunité.

Pour se consolider davantage, le jeune opérateur mise sur des concepts innovants qui riment avec l'évolution de l'économie



Simb Airlines opère depuis la capitale centrafricaine.

Photo à gauche : Jacques Assoumou : « Nous avons ici l'opportunité de prouver que nous pouvons faire aussi bien que les compagnies de référence. Nous comptons atteindre un point d'équilibre dans les deux ou trois années à venir. »

IMAGES : SIMB AIRLINES

mondiale : l'un d'eux est l'introduction de monnaie numérique dans ses transactions. « On constate aujourd'hui que la cryptomonnaie se développe à une vitesse exponentielle, elle risque d'être un des moyens de paiement les plus utilisés dans quelques années. Nous anticipons à Simb Airlines et nous acceptons des paiements par cryptomonnaie. »

Simb Airlines se définit comme une compagnie modeste mais estime avoir les atouts pour devenir une compagnie majeure dans le secteur de l'aviation d'affaires en Afrique.

Jacques Assoumou ne cache pas ses ambitions à court terme. « Nous avons ici l'opportunité de prouver que nous pouvons faire aussi bien que les compagnies de référence. Nous comptons atteindre un point d'équilibre dans les deux ou trois années à venir. »

SUMMARY

BUSINESS AIRLINE LAUNCHES IN BANGUI

In the heart of the equatorial forest of Central Africa, Simb Airlines is taking its first tentative steps in the business aviation market, writes Romuald Ngueyap.

Following years of political and security turmoil, the Central African Republic is gradually returning to stability and this has encouraged investment in the new company, which formally launched operations earlier this year.

The project is led by Cameroonian businessman, Emile Parfait Simb, chairman of Simb Group and head of Global Investment Trading SA.

He appointed Gabonese airline pilot, Jacques Assoumou – previously COO at Trans Air Congo (TAC) – to head-up the company.

From its Bangui hub, Simb Airlines currently operates a Beechcraft King Air 200 with a capacity of six VIP seats. But, explained Assoumou: "We are on the way to acquiring two Embraer ERJ145s and we intend to grow over two to three years."

The company offers private and on-demand flights, covering cities of the sub-Saharan region such as Douala, Ndjamena, Libreville and Brazzaville Pointe Noire.

"In this environment we are working with a small but professional staff to minimise running and operating costs, as running an airline in a country 'blacklisted' by the EU creates positive pressure for us in terms of safety and good governance," said Assoumou.

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Bestfly on the front foot

Taking on an emergency airline contract abroad and modernising its helicopter fleet at home has seen Angolan operator, Bestfly, expanding its roles.

Alan Dron reports.

When an airline is considering starting an operation in a new country, months of work normally precede the day of the first flight. But, when an archipelago for which air transport is a daily necessity suddenly loses its sole airline operator, those months of preparation are a luxury that is simply no longer available.

That problem arose in Cabo Verde, off the west African coast, in June.

Local carrier TICV, previously known as Binter CV and part of the Spain-based Binter Group of companies, had provided an inter-island service since 2016. However, it was unable to come to an agreement with the archipelago's government over financial support in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and ended its services in mid-May.

Enter Angola's Bestfly: "We didn't have a contract when we started to prepare for entry into service, a process that took two to three weeks," said Bestfly's CEO, Nuno Pereira. "From the contract signing to starting operations was two days."



Handling the ultra-rapid start to operations, said Pereira, was helped by the fact that both Cabo Verde and Angola have Portuguese as a common language, both countries having previously been Portuguese territories. "It eased communication. There was cooperation between both civil aviation authorities and governments."

Bestfly took over the shell of TICV from Binter and quickly moved one of its two ATR 72-600 turboprops up from Angola to start services. Since then, it has leased a further pair of ATR 72-600s, one of which was added to its new operation while the other replaced the reassigned aircraft in Angola. Ongoing services will be conducted under the TICV name.

Bestfly's activity in the island group, which lies some 630km (340nm) west of Senegal, began with six sectors a day, which had doubled to 12 daily by mid-July. "We're flying 10 hours a day," said Pereira in July. The shortest sector is 12 minutes, the longest is around 1 hour 10 minutes.

Doubling up: Bestfly's fleet of two ATR 72-600s is doubling to four as it takes on the new contract in Cabo Verde.

PICTURE: ATR



"This is the first time we've handled this type of high-frequency service. We were flying 500 legs a month with one aircraft. We've had more than 80% load factors, which is fantastic."

The TICV operation is being restructured to make it sustainable over the long term.

The Cabo Verde Government initially engaged Bestfly on an emergency six-month contract, but the Angolan airline hopes to make its service in the archipelago a long-term one, with the acquisition of TICV transforming the company's operation in the archipelago from that of a foreign carrier into that of a domestic airline.

Meanwhile, back in Angola, Bestfly is strengthening its offering in the helicopter market with the delivery of a pair of new Leonardo AW139s.

The helicopters, leased from Abu Dhabi Aviation (ADA), will be employed primarily on offshore services for the oil and gas industry, said Pereira. They will be outfitted for medevac duties.

Bestfly has contracts with several major oil companies such as Total, Exxon, and BP.

It is anticipated the aircraft will each fly 30 to 50 hours per month on duties including search-and-rescue, medevac, and ad hoc work.

The aircraft will replace two existing seven-year-old AW139s and feature the latest upgrades. They will also mark a move by the Angolan operator to having greater input into the maintenance and support of its helicopters.

"They have the latest batch of avionics," said Pereira. "That's one of the most significant improvements." Other improvements include an increase in carrying capability from 12 to 15 passengers.

Bestfly has had a close relationship in recent years with helicopter service provider, Heli-Union, which has given extensive operational and maintenance support. While Pereira emphasised that the relationship with Heli-Union remains excellent: "We are now in a transition phase by adding the new aircraft," with Angolan law stipulating that companies, such as Bestfly, should use more Angolan pilots and mechanics.

Angolan personnel will be trained on the new machines at the Abu Dhabi Aviation Training Centre.



With competition strong in the oil and gas market, Bestfly decided to acquire the latest models of the AW139 to give itself an edge in the marketplace, said Pereira: "We're offering a better product with brand-new machines."

The new aircraft are "oil-and-gas offshore-configured", said Dr Mark Pierotti, ADA's commercial department director.

"They're seven-tonne machines; they are more powerful and can take more weight. They have floats and state-of-the-art safety equipment that the oil and gas industry insists upon." This includes new GPS-enabled life rafts, should the worst happen and one of the helicopters has to ditch offshore.

"They'll be based in Luanda, operating under Bestfly's air operator's certificate (AOC), but will be owned by ADA and we will support them with pilot training in Abu Dhabi and full spare parts," added Pierotti.

– home and away...



More aircraft: Bestfly's Nuno Pereira signs for the new AW139 helicopter.

PICTURE: BESTFLY

The aircraft will be supplied on a five-year lease that could be extended and could, potentially, lead to more aircraft being supplied, he added.

The venture with Bestfly is ADA's first in Angola, although the company already has significant links with Africa, with aircraft located in several countries.

"It's a fairly big market for us," said Pierotti. "We placed two aircraft last month in Zambia and South Africa." The company also has machines in Nigeria.

Asia and Africa are definitely a strategic interest at ADA: "We would like to develop our relationship with existing customers, but I'm also looking for more clients."

One route to finding new customers, he said, was the Aviation Africa conference that has been held in recent years in Kigali and Addis Ababa and which is scheduled to return to the Rwandan capital again next year.

Pierotti used the event to search for new locations in which to place aircraft, as well as for new partners and lessees and "It's starting to pay off now." ■

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Pioneering Kenya on the Eve of becoming upwardly mobile



New dawn for Eve: The Embraer offshoot will provide vertical take-off craft in the deal with Kenya Airways' unmanned aircraft systems division, Fahari Aviation.

IMAGE: EMBRAER

UAM widely accessible. The partnership will also establish a series of concepts and procedures to scale up electrical vertical take-off and landing aircraft, often abbreviated today to electrical vertical aircraft (EVA). As part of this, Eve and Fahari's tasks will include collaboration on how to create an urban air traffic management system, while Fahari will help Eve's aircraft to be integrated into Kenya Airways' overall operations. This later point also poses challenges, given the completely different nature

A further demonstration of Africa's position in the vanguard of new-technology aerial solutions has come with plans for an urban air mobility scheme in Kenya. Alan Dron reports.

Urban air mobility (UAM) is widely expected to be the new face of aviation in the coming decade. Small, ecologically friendly, possibly autonomously controlled air vehicles will deliver fly-when-you-want services to city dwellers across the globe.

Practicalities, such as possible congestion and safety in crowded air corridors above cities, where a collision could not only produce casualties in the aircraft involved but also on the ground, have still to be ironed out.

But news that Brazilian aerospace manufacturer, Embraer, is linking up with Kenya Airways to pioneer a new UAM system in the east African nation is another indicator of the continent's leading role in the field of next-generation aviation.

Five years ago, US start-up company, Zipline, began delivering urgent medical supplies by small aerial drones in Rwanda. Since then, it has expanded operations into Ghana and delivers more than 160 types of medical products to more than 2,500 hospitals and clinics within minutes, as opposed to hours by car or truck.

The company's drones have flown more than 12 million miles in Rwanda and Ghana, and made more than 180,000 deliveries.

The relative lack of surface infrastructure in large parts of Africa make this drone service particularly useful, but the continent is rapidly embracing new projects that will carry people, not just small packages of drugs or blood supplies.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between Kenya Airways and Embraer will see the airline (through its unmanned aircraft systems division Fahari Aviation) and the manufacturer (through its Eve UAM offshoot) developing operational models that will make

of mainline airline operations and the new phenomenon of ultra-small air vehicles carrying a few passengers.

"The creation of disruptive and widely accessible UAM solutions will help democratise mobility by making it more accessible and giving communities more options," said Eve's president and CEO, Andre Stein.

"With our aircraft and aerospace services backing, and Kenya Airways' innovative approach to air mobility, we are enthusiastic about opening this region to more sustainable and community-friendly air access for all."



Allan Kilavuka, Kenya Airways' Group MD and CEO, said that innovation was a critical element of the carrier's long-term sustainability, with Fahari Aviation at the forefront of exploring advanced technologies such as UAM.

If the partnership with Eve comes to fruition, passengers using a UAM to travel, for example, from Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to the city's downtown area, could transform a 90-minute road trip into a six-minute aerial hop.

In a further example of Kenya Airways' growing interest in unmanned vehicles, the airline has teamed up with UK company, Skyports, to launch a drone delivery service in the east African nation.

The collaboration brings together Kenya Airways' expertise in aviation services and Skyports' drone delivery logistics service, Delivery by Skyports.

The initial aim of the partnership is to explore the commercial viability and impact of a variety of medical, logistical, and inspection services alongside Kenya's leading public and private institutions. Target date for the launch of the first drone delivery flights is later this year.

Skyports has obtained regulatory approvals to fly the UK's first beyond visual line-of-sight medical drone deliveries, with operations currently under way. Similarly, it supported the UK Royal Mail's first drone parcel delivery service in Scotland in December 2020.

Mercy missions are a new test for Dippenaar

Former South African international cricketer, Boeta Dippenaar, is the new chief executive officer of South African helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS) operator, Rocket. Jon Lake reports.

Rocket (rapid on call emergency transport) was the brainchild of André Coetzee, the executive chairman of the Henley Air Group of companies.

Coetzee, a 15,000-hour pilot, a designated flight examiner, an aeronautical engineer and a PHD in aviation management, wanted to establish a “first-world intensive care medical service, operating in a third-world country”.

Henley Air already had more than five years’ experience, having chalked up some 3,460 air ambulance missions and more than 5,000 flying hours, when it launched Rocket as a stand-alone HEMS provider in July 2020.

During its first year of service Rocket transported 300 patients, operating from bases in Johannesburg and Kimberley, from where its five Bell 222 UT helicopters (which have a range of 320 nautical miles) can cover roughly one-third of the country.

The company also has three Bell 230s waiting to be converted to air ambulance configuration.

Rocket’s new chief executive, Dippenaar, was previously chief pilot with Henley Air. He aims to focus firmly on human interaction, “which is so important in our line of work”.



Dippenaar happily cites an example of one of the company’s paramedics, who saw how worried a patient’s mother was, kept her updated throughout the flight, and then video-called her on landing so that she could see her daughter.

Henley Air, headquartered at Rand Airport at Germiston, Johannesburg, has a fleet that includes the Aerospatiale AS365N Dauphin, the AW119 Koala Mk II, the Bell 407, the 206 JetRanger and 206L LongRanger, the Robinson R22 Beta II and R44 Raven II, as well as the Bell 222.

The 222 is, perhaps, best known as the improbably equipped star of the fictional television series *Airwolf*.

The Model 222UT used by Rocket lacks the armament, supersonic speed, and stratospheric altitude performance of the fictional *Airwolf* helicopter, but does have a generously proportioned cabin and impressive long-range capability. This is partly because the basic 222’s retractable landing gear is replaced by skids, allowing for the installation of larger auxiliary fuel tanks.

The Rocket Bell 222UTs are instrument flight rules (IFR)-equipped, though most flights are operated using



Boeta Dippenaar: Focusing firmly on human interaction.

Below: Sign of the times – crew kitted out in Covid protection gear.

PICTURES: ROCKET



visual flight rules (VFR). Night flights are always conducted with two-pilot crews. Pilots stay IFR current in the company’s Bell 222UT FNTP II simulator.

Rocket was the first commercial operator in South Africa to add a night vision goggle (NVG) capability, which allowed the company to increase its night flying by 70%, and which made operations safer in remote areas during dark moon phases.



Henley Air also has the only South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA)-certified Bell 222 simulator (the only one of its kind in the world), allowing it to train its crews for the most demanding missions, including scenarios that would be difficult or dangerous to practise during in-aircraft training.

Coetzee scoured the globe to find the right examples of the 222UT, and has amassed a sizeable inventory of spare parts. As a result, Rocket has been able to maintain an impressive 98% serviceability rate

Each Rocket Bell 222UT is fully equipped for the HEMS role, with full intensive care equipment, including a ventilator, a defibrillator, in-flight infusion and haemorrhage pouches, syringe drivers and infusion pumps, a multi-parameter electrocardiogram and patient monitoring equipment.

The aircraft has a scoop stretcher, traction splint, head immobilisation device and spider harness, while the two bases each have a portable neonatal kit and an incubator that can be loaded aboard the aircraft when required.

Rocket provides new competition for South Africa’s other HEMS/air ambulance operators (Black Eagle Aviation, HALO, Netcare 911, and Red Cross AMS), and has partnered with some of the biggest hospital chains in South Africa.

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Egypt goes into next month's EDEX defence and security event buoyed by a massive multi-role fighter deal and with the expectation of more transactions to come.

Jon Lake reports.

SHOW'S WINNING RAFALE TICKET

With 920,000 military personnel, the largest military power in Africa and one of the leading forces worldwide, Egypt has historically maintained continuous investment in the latest weaponry.

It has also strengthened national production lines across a range of military complexes.

EDEX, taking place at the Egypt International Exhibition Centre in Cairo, therefore presents the perfect opportunity to showcase the latest technology, equipment and systems.

And Egypt has much to shout about having, earlier this summer, concluded an estimated \$4.5 billion order for a further batch of 30 Dassault Rafale multi-role fighters.

These new Rafales will augment 24 of the type that were ordered in February 2015 and are already in service with the Egyptian Air Force (EAF).

When they arrive, a fleet of 54 Rafales will make the EAF the second largest operator of the type in the world, after France itself.

They will also make Egypt's new-generation fighter force one of the most powerful in the region.



The EAF will soon include a front-line element consisting of 11 tactical fighter wings with 13 Squadrons of F-16s, two squadrons of Su-35s, two of MiG-29Ms, two of Rafales, two of Alpha Jets and two of Mirages.

There are also seven helicopter wings or brigades, two intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) units, and two transport wings/brigades.

Egypt's existing Rafales (which are to F3-R standards) have already been seen operating in both the air-to-air role, armed with various types of Mica missile, and in the air-to-ground role, carrying the AASM Hammer stand-off precision-guided missile (PGM).

The Rafale entered service with the French Navy in 2004, and with the French Air and Space Force in 2006, but export orders proved elusive until February 2015, when Egypt signed for 24 aircraft, and a DCNS multi-mission frigate in a deal valued at €5.3 billion (\$5.9 billion).

Egypt also took options for a further 12 aircraft.

New deal: The EAF has signed a five-year performance-based integrated support and services contract with Airbus for its 24 C295 aircraft.

PICTURE: AIRBUS



The Egyptian order allowed the French Government to cut delivery of the Rafale to its air force and navy from 2016, while maintaining or exceeding the minimum economic annual output of 11 aircraft.

An option for 12 additional Rafales was reportedly not exercised due to fears about Cairo's ability to repay state-backed guaranteed loans, and negotiations for more Rafales and warships initially failed to bear fruit.

However, the flow of Egyptian defence orders has picked up again more recently. Thales has supplied four Ground Master 400 (GM400) 3D digital air defence radars, for example.

On April 15 this year, it was announced that the EAF, the largest C295 fleet operator worldwide, had signed a five-year performance-based integrated support and services contract with Airbus for its 24 aircraft, aiming to maximize fleet availability, and to ensure mission readiness, all while saving maintenance costs.

Then, on May 3, Egypt announced that it had signed a contract with Dassault Aviation to purchase 30 more Rafales.

The contract is worth an estimated \$4.5 billion and will be financed through a 10-year loan, 85% guaranteed by the French state, with BNP Paribas SA, Credit Agricole, Societe Generale and CIC.

Dassault Aviation chairman and CEO, Eric Trappier, heralded the announcement saying: "This new order is proof of the unflinching bond that unites Egypt, the first foreign user of the Rafale, as it was for the Mirage 2000, with Dassault Aviation."

The new batch of Egyptian Rafales will be to F3-R standard, with active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar and the ability to integrate advanced sensors and weapons, including Thales' Talios new-generation laser designator pod, and the laser homing version of Safran's modular AASM air-to-ground weapon, as well as MBDA's Meteor long-range air-to-air missile.



Dassault Aviation is expected to integrate a data link that will allow the Rafale to communicate with US and NATO allies, and with Egypt's non-western fighter types.

Negotiations for Egypt to arm its Rafales with the MBDA SCALP cruise missile began when the first 24 aircraft were ordered, but stalled as a result of the US international traffic in arms regulations (ITAR), as the missile contains US-manufactured components. This log jam was finally broken in February this year.

The deal followed a controversial state visit to

Powerful: The new-generation Rafales will make Egypt's fighter force one of the most dominant in the region.

PICTURE: DASSAULT AVIATION - A PECCHI



Paris in early December 2020 by Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. French President Emmanuel Macron decorated el-Sisi with France's highest honour, the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, during the visit.

This provoked outrage among human rights activists, but Macron defended his actions and said that he would not make the sale of French weapons to Egypt conditional on human rights. This was, he averred, because he did not want to weaken Cairo's ability to counter terrorism in the region.

France and Egypt are forging a closer relationship, sharing many common interests in the Middle East, including a growing antipathy towards Turkey under Islamist President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The additional Rafales to Egypt follows a contract, signed with Greece, for the sale of 18 Rafales. This includes six new-build aircraft to be delivered in the spring of 2022 and 12 second-hand units, which will be taken from the French Air Force inventory.

The Indian Air Force is also in the process of taking delivery of 36 Rafales, while Qatar has received 27 of the 36 it has on order.

The French Minister of the Armed Forces, Florence Parly, welcomed the new Rafale to Egypt, as France's strategic partner. "This export

success is crucial for our sovereignty and the maintenance of 7,000 industrial jobs in France for three years," she said.

The delivery of the new Rafales should allow the retirement of Egypt's remaining Mirage 5s, and probably the Mirage 2000s as well.

There have already been suggestions that Egypt could eventually purchase the new Rafale F4, increasing the (overall) Rafale fleet to 72 or even 100 aircraft "depending on Egypt's financial capacity".

The new F4 version will feature enhanced radar capabilities, and new weapon systems, including heavier versions of the AASM Hammer precision-guided munitions and updated variants of the MICA air-to-air missile.



The acquisition of the Rafales is just one element in a wider modernisation, which has also seen the procurement of 46 MiG-29M2s and 24 Su-35s.

French newspaper, *La Tribune*, has also reported that Airbus is supplying a reconnaissance satellite and two A330MRTT tankers to Egypt, reportedly taking the value of the overall deal to \$6.35 billion.

The expanded programme will reportedly

include one or two FalconEye observation satellites, similar to that operated by the UAE armed forces.

Egypt will also finally acquire two Airbus A330 multi-role tanker transport (MRTT) aircraft. Though the EAF does practice 'buddy refuelling' with both the Rafale and the MiG-29M2, it does not have a dedicated air-to-air refuelling tanker, and has been interested in acquiring the A330 MRTT since 2014.

The aircraft can carry 111 tonnes of fuel and can transfer up to 3.6 tonnes per minute. It can remain on station for four hours, 1,000 nautical miles from base, and offload 50 tonnes of fuel during the mission, or it can support the deployment of four fast jets, carrying 12 tonnes of equipment and all the required groundcrew, over a distance of 2,800 nautical miles.

There have been suggestions that Egypt could order as many as four A330 MRTTs.

There is also considerable potential for further naval business, including fast missile boats, corvettes, light frigates and submarines.

■ More than 400 exhibitors, showcasing the latest technology, equipment and systems across land, sea and air, are expected to attend EDEX from November 29 to December 2. In excess of 30,000 industry visitors are expected. ■



Loading up: Angola has provided a single Il-76 cargo aircraft to support the SADC mission in Mozambique. The aircraft is seen here loading Lesotho Defence Force vehicles being flown to Pemba.
PICTURE: LDF



Specialists: Dyck Advisory Group operated a small helicopter fleet in Cabo Delgado, conducting air strikes against the insurgents. In March 2021, its aircraft rescued more than 200 Mozambican and foreign civilians after Palma was overrun by the insurgency.
PICTURE: DAG

Mozambique's bush war from the sky

Mozambique's Cabo Delgado Province, the setting of an ongoing jihadist insurgency since 2017, has seen a wide range of private and government forces carrying out air operations. Now the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) is weighing in as well.
Erwan de Cherisey reports.

In June this year, following a Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) summit in Mozambique capital, Maputo, the deployment of a military force to help combat violent extremism in Cabo Delgado was agreed. Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, and Tanzania have all committed troops, while Zimbabwe has stated that it could deploy personnel to train the Mozambique armed forces (FADM).

Meanwhile, Rwanda announced in July that it was deploying 700 soldiers and 300 policemen to Cabo Delgado to support the FADM, using RwandAir Airbus A330-300s to airlift the troops. Armoured vehicles were also flown to Mozambique.

All this activity comes in the wake of the ever-worsening security situation in Cabo Delgado Province, which has been ongoing since 2017.

The FADM were the first to fly into Cabo Delgado, with their Mi-8T aircraft transporting personnel and cargo. In April 2019, one aircraft crashed during a logistics flight, leaving just two Mi-8Ts in the inventory.

The rapidly degrading security outlook eventually prompted the Mozambique Government to reach out to Russia's Wagner Group for support, leading to the deployment of troops, together with Mi-17 and Mi-24 helicopters in September 2019. Wagner's presence proved short-lived, however, and it pulled out in November 2019 after suffering several fatalities, and failing to establish a working relationship with the FADM or the Mozambican Police.

Meanwhile, in September 2019, the Mozambican Police contracted South African company, Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), which was conducting counter-poaching in southern Mozambique, to support security operations in Cabo Delgado.

DAG's contribution centred on air support, with a small fleet of SA341 Gazelle, Alouette III, Bell UH-1H, Bell 206, Bell 407, and AS350 helicopters, Cessna 208, Diamond DA-42, Bat Hawk ultralights and a CADG Helix intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft.

One of the Gazelles and a Bat Hawk were lost in 2020 without loss of life.

In March 2021, following the insurgents' attack on Palma, DAG deployed three Gazelles, one Alouette III and

two AS350s, which extracted civilians from the middle of the combat zone. DAG subsequently departed Cabo Delgado after its contract was not renewed.

From mid-2020, South Africa's Paramount Group and Dubai-based Burnham Global began providing training, equipment, and advisory services to Mozambique. By March 2021, two SA341s had been delivered by Paramount to the FADM, together with at least two Mi-17-1Vs and two Mi-24s. A further two SA341s were scheduled for delivery as *African Aerospace* was going to press.

One Mwari aircraft, configured for ISR duties, is reported to have been received by the FADM, which would make Mozambique the first known user of the type.

Paramount has also been training Mozambican aircrews at its facilities in South Africa.

The attack on Palma, which put a halt to a major offshore gas exploitation project conducted by French company, Total, and the general breakdown in security in Cabo Delgado, led to renewed calls for a foreign military intervention, hence the SADC involvement.



The deployment of the first troops of the SADC mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) took place in late July when South African special forces were flown to Pemba aboard South African Air Force (SAAF) C-130BZ transports.

Botswana followed suit, airlifting its own troops in Botswana Defence Force (BDF) C-130Bs and an Air Botswana Embraer E-170 airliner.

Angola, which has limited its contribution to a small cadre of special forces personnel and an Ilyushin Il-76 transport, has airlifted cargo for the BDF contingent and has also transported most of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) troops committed to SAMIM.

Lesotho first sent an advanced party of 12 to Mozambique on August 8, aboard an LDF Airbus C212-300, which is to be used for strategic communications between Lesotho and Mozambique throughout the duration of the deployment. The remainder of the 125-strong contingent, its equipment, and vehicles were airlifted by the Angola Air Force Il-76 between August 12 and 18, from Maseru to Pemba.

Tanzania has flown its troops to Pemba aboard its Shaanxi Y-8F.

Organic air support for the SAMIM should already include two Denel Oryx helicopters from the SAAF, which were noted in Mozambique in August 2021. Two SAAF AW109LUHs should also be deployed. ■



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Fighter on show: A Sukhoi Su-35 performing at MAKS 2009 air show in Moscow.

PICTURE: OLEG BELYAKOV VIA WIKIPEDIA COMMONS.



New Sukhoi fighters arriving in Egypt

The Egyptian Air Force has reportedly started receiving the first of around two dozen Su-35S fighters. Delivery is expected to be complete in 2023.

It follows completion of Egypt's 2015 order for 50 Mikoyan MiG-29M/M2 aircraft, with the last aircraft delivered earlier this year.

Egypt's \$2 billion order for 20 Su-35S fighters (or for "more than two dozen" aircraft according to one source) was enacted in late 2018, but it was not formally announced until March 2019.

Egypt is a long-standing customer for Russian combat aircraft, though it has also procured fighters from the US and France, diversifying its sources of supply.

The Su-35S is an advanced derivative of the original Su-27 Flanker, a heavy, twin-engined interceptor and air superiority fighter, which was equivalent to the US Boeing F-15A-D Eagle in concept.

The new Su-35S began development in 2003 and the first prototype flew in 2007. The type entered production in 2009.

The aircraft is equipped with an N-035 Irbis-E passive electronically scanned array (PESA) radar, with OLS-35 infrared search-and-track (IRST) targeting system, and an L175M Khibiny electronic countermeasures system.

The new jets will supplement the MiG-29M/M2 fighters Egypt has received and help replace obsolete MiG-21s and J-7s. ■

DENEL ANNOUNCES RESTRUCTURING PACKAGE

South African-based defence solutions provider, Denel, has announced a series of far-reaching steps it intends to take to ensure the company's sustainability.

It stated that a streamlined and refocused Denel will be able to be a sustainable business and return to profitability within the next five years. This will be done through a comprehensive restructuring of the defence technology company.

William Hlakoane, the company's interim group chief executive said: "We are determined to turn Denel around and repurpose it while retaining the core capabilities required to meet South Africa's strategic security requirements."

Denel's executive management and its board have put

together a comprehensive five-year plan to revitalise the company, part of which includes reducing Denel's current operating divisions (plus one subsidiary) from six to two.

One division will focus on engineering, while the other will concentrate on manufacturing and maintenance.

The engineering division will merge all Denel's capabilities in artillery, infantry and vehicle systems, its missile and precision-guided munitions business, as well as its management of complex integrated systems.

The maintenance and manufacturing division will build on Denel's market reputation in the fields of aeronautics, unmanned aerial vehicle systems, and the production of small and medium calibre ammunition, as well as the production of combat vehicles. ■

NAF pilot shot down

A pilot ejected safely as a Nigerian Air Force (NAF) Alpha jet was shot down by 'bandits' on the border of the northern Zamfara and Kaduna states.

Armed gangs, referred to locally as 'bandits', have been blamed for a spate of recent kidnappings in this part of north-western Nigeria.

The pilot, Flight Lieutenant Abayomi Dairo, had finished a raid against kidnappers when he came under intense fire.

He ejected and then, according to a NAF spokesperson, used "survival instincts" to avoid capture and find shelter, before rejoining his comrades. ■

STUDENTS ON PARADE

International military students from Burkina Faso, Malawi, and Jordan attended when combat aviation advisors from the US 711th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) gathered to discuss aviation capabilities with members from partner-nations as part of the building partner aviation capacity seminar (BPACS).

"BPACS gives us an opportunity to discuss what we can help build with our partners," said Captain Frederick Feigel, chief of advanced training at the 711th



SOS. "The programme also spreads awareness of our aviation capabilities before we work with our partner nations."

Major Cuthbert Somda,

commander of a helicopter squadron in Burkina Faso, said: "My nation has a younger air force, so we can learn a lot from US aerial capacity. This has been a wonderful

opportunity to see how our partnership with the US is building our capabilities." ■

PICTURE: US AIR FORCE, SENIOR AIRMAN DYLAN GENTILE.

VIP aircraft hunt

The Ghana Air Force is looking for a new presidential aircraft that can carry between 70 and 100 passengers.

Defence Minister, Dominic Nitiwul, said the current presidential jet has many challenges, such as the limited passengers it could carry, the number of times required for refuelling on a trip, and luggage capacity, among others. ■



Fast and deadly: Nigeria's new JF-17s will be used in the country's ongoing campaign against Boko Haram insurgents.

PICTURE: NAF.

NOW THERE'S THUNDER IN THE NIGERIAN SKY

The JF-17N Thunder fighter aircraft has now entered service with the Nigerian Air Force.

Jon Lake looks at what this could mean for the future.

The JF-17 Thunder, an export version of the JF-17A Block 2, is now the fastest aircraft in the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) inventory.

Three arrived at the NAF's Makurdi Air Base (also known as Kwenev) on board a Pakistan Air Force II-76 transport aircraft in March.

They were officially handed over to the NAF on May 21 during a ceremony marking the 57th anniversary of the service.

In July, Pakistani media reported that Nigeria's military and political leadership had "unanimously conveyed complete satisfaction with the performance of newly inducted JF-17 fighter aircraft" during a visit by General Nadeem Raza, Pakistan's chairman joint chiefs of staff committee (CJCS), who met with President Muhammadu Buhari.

Nigerian interest in the JF-17 was first reported in 2014 and the then NAF chief of air staff, Air Marshal Adesola Nunayon Amosu, visited Pakistan to begin preliminary negotiations. This followed NAF expressions of interest in the Textron AirLand Scorpion – on the face of it a more useful and relevant aircraft for Nigeria's ongoing campaign against Boko Haram insurgents.

□□□□

In December 2014, during a major defence exhibition in Karachi, it was reported that Nigeria would procure 25-40 JF-17Ns from the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex.

Nigeria placed an order for an initial batch of three JF-17s in 2016, becoming the type's second export customer.

In 2018, Pakistan's economic coordination committee finally approved a deal to sell the three JF-17s to Nigeria at a cost of \$184.3 million. An option for eight additional aircraft was included in the contract, as well as a training package, under which an initial cadre of pilots and maintainers underwent training in Pakistan. They graduated in January this year. Makurdi Air Base has been modernised to

accommodate the JF-17N fighters, and a new facility has also been commissioned to accommodate the Pakistani pilots and technicians supporting the aircraft during the first year of operations in Nigeria.

The introduction of the new fighter marks the latest step in a joint Pakistan Air Force/NAF modernisation programme, which also includes the delivery of 14 MFI-17 Super Mushshak basic trainers (the first four donated by Pakistan free of charge), and the upgrade of Nigeria's existing fleet of F-7NI fighters.

Some sources suggest that Pakistan will also supply Karakorum K-8 intermediate jet trainers (upgraded by the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex and equipped to fire unguided rockets).

□□□□

Air Marshal Syed Noman Ali, the Pakistan Air Force's vice chief of the air staff, has pledged Pakistan's continuing support for Nigeria's efforts to meet its air power requirements.

The Nigerian acquisition of the JF-17 is just one element of a wider fleet modernisation programme that also includes the procurement of eight Mil Mi-35M attack helicopters from Russia, and 12 Embraer/SNC A-29 Super Tucano close air support aircraft from the US.

Further US aircraft sales, including a proposed sale of 12 Bell AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters, is being delayed by the US Senate foreign relations committee because of concerns about Nigeria's human rights record.

Though the JF-17 is, in some ways, unsuited to the kind of counter-insurgency (COIN) operations carried out by the NAF against the Islamist Boko Haram insurgents, it is equipped with an advanced electro-optical targeting pod that will allow pinpoint attacks to be made using precision-guided munitions around the clock.

This could prove to be a useful capability to augment the newly delivered A-29 Super Tucanos, which are a more obvious 'fit' for the COIN role, and which are expected to bear the brunt of operations against Boko Haram. ■

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) is rapidly increasing its pilot training capabilities.

Erwan de Cherisey reports.

NAF pilot training has come a long way recently following decades of neglect. In July 2021, six new NAF helicopter pilots received their wings after completing basic flying training in the UK, at Draken Helicopter Academy.

Meanwhile, 22 of the force's officers are currently undergoing basic flight training in-country, while additional personnel are being trained abroad.

It's all a far cry from back in 2015, when pilot training capabilities were at an all-time low.

At that time, the NAF lacked a primary training aircraft following the almost complete withdrawal from service of its Van's Aircraft RV-6A (a two-seat, single-engine, low-wing aircraft sold in kit form).

NAF officers were, thus, being sent to different countries for primary training – including Egypt, South Africa, and the US – but this caused standardisation issues and did not create enough new pilots to meet operational requirements. Consequently, a first attempt was made at solving the primary training aircraft shortage by procuring five Diamond Aircraft DA40NGs and a simulator, which were delivered in 2015.

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While the DA40NG brought new capabilities, it was not capable of performing aerobatics, which was deemed a major shortfall, leading to a decision to seek yet another new basic trainer.

The Pakistan Air Complex (PAC) Super Mushshak was subsequently selected and 10 aircraft were ordered in 2016. Among the reasons for this choice was Pakistan's willingness to loan four aircraft to Nigeria at no cost from December 2016 until October 2017.

In August 2017, the first five of the Super Mushshaks were commissioned into service with the 401 Flight Training School (FTS) at Kaduna. In July 2018, the remaining five aircraft were delivered.

The NAF's initial ambition was to replace the DA40NGs with the Super Mushshak but, instead, it continues to use the Diamond aircraft for initial screening.

After completing basic training, pilots are selected to become fighter, transport, or helicopter pilots.



New pilot training scheme hits the ground running

Versatile: The AW109M is used for the advanced and tactical phase of the NAF helicopter pilot training curriculum.

PICTURE: NAF

Far left: The delivery of 10 PAC Super Mushshak aircraft to the NAF has allowed for the reallocation of primary pilot training in Nigeria.

Left: The NAF is revitalising its fleet of L-39ZAs as its pilot training needs continue to increase.

PICTURES: NAF



Future transport pilots stay with the 401 FTS and transition to the Dornier Do 228, while fighter pilots are sent to the 403 FTS in Kano to operate the L-39ZA.

Upon completing basic training, future fighter pilots are sent to the 407 Air Combat Training Group at Kainji, where they convert on to the Dassault Dornier Alpha Jet and go through tactical training, which includes air-to-air and air-to-ground combat manoeuvring.

The age and continuous combat use of the Alpha Jet fleet is posing increasing challenges as fewer and fewer aircraft are available for training.

The entry into service of the new Super Tucano may lead to a reduction in operational tempo for the Alpha Jet, which could prove beneficial to the training effort.

The replacement of the Alpha Jet is on the agenda and, while rumours of a potential purchase

of Leonardo M346FA have spread online, these have so far been denied by the manufacturer.

In 2019, three L-39s Albatros trainers, which had been grounded, were reactivated by Aero Vodochody with NAF support in Kano. A contract for the overhaul of three other L-39s was then signed, with the aircraft arriving in the Czech Republic in July 2020. These are to be upgraded with new Genesys Aerosystems IDU 680 electronic flight instrument systems.

Another three aircraft were put through life extension at Kano and returned to service in December 2020.

Longer term plans could involve upgrading all L-39ZAs with the same Genesys avionics.

Aero Vodochody has also been pitching its L-39NG to the NAF.

In addition to its training role, the L-39ZA is used as an attack aircraft and has been

committed to operations against Boko Haram and cattle rustlers in northern Nigeria.

NAF helicopter pilots are usually trained at the International Helicopter School of Enugu, which is run under a public-private partnership and flies several Robinson R66s. The school also trains commercial pilots but has a limited capacity, which is why the NAF continues to send pilots abroad for training.

Advanced and tactical training for rotary-wing pilots takes place at the 405 Helicopter Combat Training Group of Enugu on the AW109M. It includes tactical flying and weapons delivery training.

The AW109s are also used in combat duties, which affect their availability for training, although the recent delivery of six additional aircraft has provided some breathing space in that regard.

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Keith Mwanalushi speaks to Embraer’s Ramón Vahed about cost-effective maintenance for African operators following the strengthening of ties between Kenya Airways and Congo Airways.

OPENING THE AIRWAYS TO WORKING TOGETHER

Earlier this year, a state visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta, culminated in the signing of a strategic cooperation agreement between Kenya Airways and Congo Airways.

The two flag-carriers said the agreement included cooperation in aircraft maintenance and technical expertise, particularly on the Embraer E-Jet fleet training in engineering.

During the signing of the partnership in Kinshasa, Kenya Airways Group CEO, Allan Kilavuka, and his Congo Airways counterpart, Désiré Balazire Bantu, highlighted the importance of the strategic cooperation between the two national carriers.

Bantu added that the partnership would contribute to the promotion and development of both companies and provide better solutions and innovations as they prepared for the single African air transport market (SAATM).

Embraer currently supports a fleet of 247 aircraft operating in Africa and the Middle East with 74 airlines in 33 countries. Kenya Airways and Congo Airways are both key partners in the region.

Kenya Airways currently operates an Embraer maintenance service centre – through its technical department – having flown the E-Jets since 2008.



In January 2021, Congo Airways placed an order for two E195-E2s. This came just six months after its initial order for two E2s, bringing the total order to four aircraft valued at \$272 million at list prices.

Ramón Vahed, Embraer services and support managing director, customer support and training for the Middle East and Africa, said his organisation had vetted and qualified Kenya Airways, through a rigorous selection and audit process, as an Embraer authorised service centre with a maintenance capability on the E-Jets fleet.

“This authorisation attracts a benefits package, which is aimed at creating sustainable value for the airline service provider and delivering world-class quality aircraft maintenance services,” he added.

Embraer, by virtue of its services and support arm, has a wide range of bespoke aviation training products and services, offered directly or in conjunction with its global partners, which are tailored to suit operators of various fleet sizes.

Having access to E-Jet and E2 training opportunities, especially when operating small but growing fleets, is critical for operators, as Vahed explained: “Various options exist as part of the training support value proposition, from

e-learning and virtual classrooms, to deploying highly skilled instructors at the customer’s main base to support regulatory-approved theoretical and practical training needs.”

Embraer believes that, as airlines start to ramp up their operations, the E2 family is well positioned to right-size routes previously operated by narrow-bodies, while keeping frequencies and adjusting capacity to new levels.

In the wider scope of things is the availability of flightdeck simulator training for operators of the E-Jets and E2s in Africa.

“Established strategic partnerships are in place with global flight-training institutions providing a network of more than 60 simulators,” said Vahed.

“Embraer has also proactively invested in the development of a technologically advanced Embraer-owned aviation training centre in Johannesburg, South Africa, which houses a full flight level D E-Jet simulator offering, among other things, flight, cabin crew and maintenance training.”

Vahed said services available included pilot initial type rating and recurrence training, as well as the possibility of full-flight simulator dry hour lease. “The facility has been strategically positioned to become the service provider option of choice to E-Jets operators within the African region, but also in support of global demand,” he concluded.



Established strategic partnerships are in place with global flight-training institutions providing a network of more than 60 simulators.

RAMÓN VAHED



Long-time operator: Kenya Airways has flown the E-Jets since 2008. PICTURES: EMBRAER

Tough business decisions often have to be made on flights. For Phyl Durdey, founder of Flightline Training Services, there was one he got “absolutely right”. Marcelle Nethersole reports.

Flightline’s Nairobi centre proves to be no flight of fancy



It was on a flight back to Canada from a conference in Kenya that Phyl Durdey, CEO and founder of Flightline Training Services, had a serious conversation with his senior director of operations, Jean-Luc Trudel, about the possibility of opening a training centre in Nairobi.

While in the country, several of Flightline’s Kenyan customers had approached him about supporting the operations at Wilson Airport.

“By the time we landed the decision was made; we were going to do it. Ten weeks later and it was open,” said Durdey, who launched Flightline Training Services (Flightline) in Canada in 2001.

“I had been made redundant from an international training organisation, so decided to set up something myself on the principle that affordable high-quality technical training is the key to a higher standard of aircraft maintenance, increased safety, and lower operation cost,” explained Durdey.



“Flightline started with a Dash-8 course and a human factors training programme. As the customer base grew, so did Flightline, introducing an array of additional aircraft training programmes.”

In 2005, the company started to operate outside of Canada and, pre-Covid, it was present and delivering training in 45 countries around the world. Today, it is ranked as Canada’s largest technical training organisation.

However, Africa is a continent for which Durdey has a keen fascination.

In 2006, Flightline started to support the operators at Wilson Airport. Subsequently it expanded to Tanzania and Rwanda and then, two years later, it opened its campus in

South Africa, not far from OR Tambo International Airport, primarily to support South African Airways Express and CemAir.

But it’s the training facility at Wilson Airport that Durdey describes as “the jewel of our fleet”.

“It is a facility that stands out for its professional, accommodating and comfortable atmosphere, filled with Kenyan hospitality and charm,” he said.

The training services it offers is type endorsement, recurrent, familiarisation, and many specialised courses to operators in the region. It supports 27 African countries.

Its fleet types include: Dash-8 Classic, Dash-8 Q400, Cessna Caravan, King Air, CRJ-200, Fokker 50, EMB 135/145, EMB 120, B1900, Twin Otter, Dornier 228, and Casa 212.

“Flightline Canada can also support the region with all other commercial aircraft from Boeing, Airbus, Embraer and Avro as required,” added Durdey, who was also keen

to note that the centre is not a Canadian training facility in Kenya, but rather a Kenyan facility supported by Canada.

The training centre has four instructors and can accommodate up to 38 students at a time in its two classrooms and one conference room. It can also offer the customers training at their facility if requested.

Since the pandemic, the company has been conducting approved

training remotely with its signature ‘green screen’ delivery method. “This is more interactive with the students than a regular Zoom meeting,” explained Durdey. “It allows them to participate from the office or even at home. The remote learning has allowed training to continue, even during this terrible pandemic.”

Durdey added that the company also has a goal to open an ab-initio mechanics school in the region.

“Our vision is to create a world-class maintenance academy that will train the students to an international standard. They would then be able to enter the workforce as qualified apprentices, much sought after in the industry.

“We have Kenyan Civil Aviation Authority acceptance of this vision and the acknowledgement of the ministry of transportation/education. The major issue in the deployment of the plan is the funding of the academy.

“It would be an intense 12-18 month programme and would come with a significant cost. We would like the Kenyan Government, or even regional governments, to look at the possibility of providing tuition subsidies for the students,” he concluded.



Early help: Phyl Durdey (left) with David Angell, High Commissioner to Canada, who helped Flightline open the training centre at Wilson Airport.

Above: Durdey describes the facility at Wilson Airport as “the jewel of our fleet”.

PICTURES: FLIGHTLINE



Major facility: The Ethiopian Airlines MRO Centre.

PICTURE: DANIEL GETACHEW

Elbowing their way into a new business: Yossi Melamed (left) and Tewolde GebreMariam.

PICTURE: ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES



ETHIOPIAN AND IAI SHARE THE LOAD

The B767 conversion centre has been established at the Ethiopian Airlines hub in Addis Ababa. It was due to start working on its first aircraft as *African Aerospace* was going to press.

IAI is a certified MRO service provider that designs and undertakes cargo conversion works. It already operates existing conversion sites at its campus in Ben Gurion International Airport and in Mexico.

The Ethiopian MRO centre is a full-fledged aircraft maintenance and engineering facility certified by both the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). It is also recognised by leading aircraft manufacturers, including Boeing and Bombardier.

Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO, Tewolde GebreMariam, said that, in line with the organisation’s diversified aviation business model of ‘vision 2025’, the airline has been growing its cargo capacity in fleet, ground service infrastructure, and its freight connectivity network.

“Accordingly, we are partnering with IAI, one of the global technology leaders in the aerospace industry, in building a cargo conversion centre in our MRO facilities in Addis Ababa,” he explained.

The cargo conversion centre was due to begin its first business with three Ethiopian Airlines-owned B-767-300 aircraft. After that, it will expand its services to all airlines in Africa and the wider region.

IAI will send customers to Ethiopia’s new facility once it successfully completes the conversion of the three B767-300s.

“We are very happy that we are able to collaborate with IAI to enable us to expand our cargo and logistics services,” said the Ethiopian CEO. “We are already the largest and leading cargo network in Africa. The capacity-building will also help us expand our MRO services with cutting-edge technology and knowledge transfer.”

Kidus Melkamu, managing director of Ethiopian MRO Services, said all the necessary tools for the conversion unit had been manufactured in the MRO centre. “We are scheduled to start the first conversion work in September,” he added.

Yossi Melamed, IAI’s executive VP and general manager

Ethiopian Airlines Group has established a centre – said to be the first of its kind in Africa – to convert B-767-300 ER passenger aircraft to dedicated freighter services in a partnership agreement with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). Kaleyesus Bekele reports.

of the aviation group, said his company was witnessing a sharp rise in demand for cargo aircraft as a result of the increase in e-commerce, which had reached record levels during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“IAI has an excellent reputation as a conversion centre of passenger-to-freighter aircraft and we are constantly receiving requests to open such facilities in more and more locations around the world,” he added.

Last year Ethiopian MRO, using its internal capacity, temporarily converted 25 of its passenger aircraft to freighters to boost its cargo capacity as demand to transport emergency medical supplies soared.

Ethiopian Airlines MRO Services began as a small maintenance centre when the national airline started operation in April 1946. It has now evolved to become one of the best MRO centres in Africa.

Today it is one of the Ethiopian Airlines Aviation Group’s seven strategic business units.

Staffed by more than 1,500 aircraft maintenance technicians and engineers, Ethiopian MRO Services has six aircraft maintenance hangars and several engine and component shops.

It primarily serves the growing fleet of the national airline. Currently, Ethiopian operates more than 120 aircraft. Twelve of them are dedicated freighters – 10 B777 and two B737.

Ethiopian MRO Services annually generates more than \$50 million from third-party business. Under ‘vision 2025’ it is targeted to achieve \$520 million in annual revenue by 2025.

The Ethiopian Airlines Aviation Group has an ambitious plan to establish an aerospace manufacturing industry.

Its MRO centre has a small wire harness manufacturing facility that engineers and supplies wire to be installed in Boeing aircraft. However, now the national flag-carrier is planning to establish a full-fledged aerospace manufacturing industry that designs and manufactures various aircraft parts.

The airline hopes to manufacture and supply aircraft parts to global aircraft manufacturers, including Boeing and Airbus.

THE RACE IS ON TO PLUG WEST AFRICA'S MRO GAP

It's no secret that African airlines bleed cash to maintain their fleets. Has the struggle to recover from Covid created an opportunity to change that with new MRO capability in west Africa? **Chuck Grieve reports.**



Done deal: Representatives of Aerojet Aviation and the US Trade and Development Agency after signing the funding agreement.

PICTURE: AEROJET

Right: Ghanaian interests aim to make Kotoka International Airport in Accra a regional MRO hub.

PICTURE: GOVERNMENT OF GHANA



Jennifer Ince: A Ghanaian MRO hub could be "healthy competition" for a similar set-up in Abuja.

PICTURE: REED SMITH

A commercial battle is taking shape in west Africa for dominance in the potentially huge MRO market. While veteran industry observers may be thinking they've seen it all before, the planning in Ghana and Nigeria shows a new determination to tackle the flight of capital – estimated at \$2-3 billion a year – associated with sending regional airlines' aircraft abroad for heavy checks, modifications and interior refurbishments.

Aerojet Aviation, a Ghanaian consultancy, is aiming to make Accra's Kotoka International Airport (KIA) a regional hub and centre of excellence for MRO. However, it faces stiff competition from at least four projects in neighbouring Nigeria intent on the same outcome.

The Aerojet plan took a major step forward in July when the US Trade and Development Agency announced grant funding for a feasibility study. Aerojet hopes to attract private finance based on the research and designs of its appointed consultants, New York-based Alton Aviation. Their target date for operational launch is the end of 2024.

According to one source, that puts them "at least four years" behind work under way in Nigeria on a new MRO centre of excellence at Abuja Airport.

That's the assessment of AJW Group, which leads the consortium named by the Nigerian authorities after a "rigorous" selection process to develop the project as a public private partnership (PPP).

An AJW spokesman said the Ghanaian project, which is

also being developed as a PPP after a rigorous selection process, "appears to still be at the feasibility phase, while we are in the process of commencing execution".

The Abuja project, an integral part of Nigeria's ambitious aviation roadmap, is on track to break soil in mid-to-late 2022.

Jennifer Ince, an aviation finance specialist in international law firm, Reed Smith's, transportation industry group, said the proposed MRO facility at KIA was "an exciting opportunity" for the region, not least because it could eventually find itself in "healthy competition" with the new set-up in Abuja.

"The prospect of not one, but two, MRO facilities in the region will, hopefully, reduce MRO overheads and shop visit times for operators, and boost regional growth in the sector," she said.

MRO remains a headache for the 17 countries of west Africa. The region has more than 30 airlines and almost no

heavy maintenance capability. A C-check for the dominant Boeing 737 types costs at least \$1.8 million; domestic capability could save around 35% of maintenance budgets – in some cases enough to ensure viability.

Aspirations abound. A partnership of Air Peace and the new Nigerian carrier,

United Nigeria Airlines (UNA), is reported to be planning a heavy maintenance facility at Enugu Airport, mainly for Embraer types. Although the partners said they wanted to be open for business in 24 months, they appeared to be waiting for airport authorities to allocate space at UNA's Enugu base.

Observers suggest that, while the move is to be encouraged, it is "purely speculative at this stage".

Elsewhere, 7Star Global Hangar has reportedly received a licence from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) to operate an all-inclusive MRO facility. Its authorisations include C-checks on regional aircraft and up to 8A inspections on B737 Classics.

Dana Air, which operates a fleet of mainly legacy types, is also looking into establishing its own MRO capability. Its chief operating officer, Obi Mbanuzuo, told reporters: "We have the knowledge and capability to do it."

West Africa's potential is not lost on outside interests. One such is UAE-based Global Jet Technic (GJT), a Part 145 approved organisation, which harbours plans to establish a base... in Ghana.

The economic cooperation agreements signed between the UAE Government and Ghana in 2019 make such commercial initiatives attractive, says GJT chief executive, Captain Khamis Al Kaabi.

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Indra's growth in Africa continues apace as it dominates the region's air traffic management (ATM) solutions.

Marcelle Nethersole talked to the company's **Guillermo Rosello**.

TOWERING CONTROL

It seems there is no stopping Spanish company, Indra, in continuing its success as a leading provider of air traffic management systems at airports across Africa.

The company, which provides proprietary solutions in specific segments of the transport and defence markets, has provided 5,700 air traffic management installations to 180 countries.

It has executed more than 550 projects in 48 out of Africa's 54 countries, implementing systems ranging from automation and surveillance to voice communications, navigation and aeronautical information.

Indra has been operating in Africa since 1995, with offices in Morocco, Algeria, Kenya, Libya, Senegal, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia.

"Our solutions have been the lynchpins in most of the countries with leading projects in key markets throughout the continent's economy," said Guillermo Rosello, Indra ATM director for Africa.

Earlier this year, the company won the contract to modernise air traffic control at Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA).

"This control centre will facilitate the coordination of flights approaching JKIA and two other airports in Nairobi (Eastleigh and Wilson). Our system will also be synchronised there as well," explained Rosello.



The state-of-the-art Indra system includes the automation of the control centre, control towers, and a simulator for training the controllers. It will also incorporate the existing sensor network, providing a highly accurate view of the air traffic.

"The Indra Air Automation solution will provide the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) with the ability to develop and reorganise its airspace in a dynamic manner, adapting to the different operational situations," said Rosello.

It will also enhance KCAA's ability to ensure the highest possible level of safety and efficiency in all the air operations that it manages.

"The project forms part of the KCAA's efforts to modernise the country's air traffic



World-class partnership: Gonzalo Gavín, Indra's head of international ATM, signs the new contract with ENNA, the air navigation service provider of Algeria.

PICTURE: INDRA

management and consolidate its position as a regional hub," added Rosello.

The company is also working extensively in Algeria and is the main technological partner of Établissement National de la Navigation Aérienne (ENNA), Algeria's air navigation service provider (ANSP).

"In 2018, Indra undertook the renewal of Algeria's entire air traffic management infrastructure within a project which, given its size and ambitious scope, will place ENNA – the state air navigation service provider – at the forefront worldwide in terms of safety, efficiency, capacity and respect for the environment," said Rosello.

The project encompasses the modernisation of the existing control centres and the creation of a new one, plus the deployment of radar and automatic dependent surveillance – broadcast (ADS-B) systems.

There's also an extensive communications network comprising a very small aperture terminal (VSAT) – a small-sized Earth station used to transmit and receive data, voice and video signals over a satellite communication network – plus VHF and FH stations.

Indra is also working with Algeria's north African neighbour, Tunisia.

"We have operated for 12 years without interruption with the Tunisian Civil Aviation and Airports Authority (OACA, Office de l'Aviation Civile et des Aéroports)," said Rosello.

"Indra has modernised most of the air traffic



management systems in the country and has also provided it with a dense network of primary and secondary radar and ADS-B systems that make this airspace one of the safest in the world."

The company has also been operating in Morocco for more than 20 years. It has been collaborating with the Moroccan Airports Authority (ONDA) for more than a decade to permanently modernise the country's air traffic management systems.

In Uganda, Indra is the technological provider of airport systems, and was commissioned to supply and install its advanced passenger information system (InSIGHT) at Entebbe International Airport.



Meanwhile, Nigeria's largest airline company (Arik) has also implemented Indra's revenue accounting solutions, while South African carrier, SAA, has opted for Indra's technology to increase its online visibility and move forward digitally.

"I should also mention the project for the modernisation of the air traffic systems in Ghana, launched in 2013, which includes automation, surveillance and communications systems for the country," said Rosello proudly. "The project incorporates a simulator that can also be used to train controllers from neighbouring countries."

Rosello said the company trains and employs local personnel for most of its activities in the region and that this brings "enormous value" to

SOMMAIRE

INDRA À LA CONQUÊTE DU CIEL

*La croissance d'Indra se poursuit à un rythme soutenu en Afrique. La société domine déjà le marché des solutions de gestion du trafic aérien (ATM). Guillermo Rosello, son directeur ATM Afrique, a indiqué à **Marcelle Nethersole** que ce secteur progressera plus rapidement sur ce continent.*

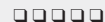
La société espagnole Indra a fourni 5 700 installations dans 180 pays dans des segments spécifiques du marché du transport et de la défense. Elle a réalisé plus de 550 projets dans 48 des 54 pays d'Afrique pour mettre en œuvre des systèmes allant de l'automatisation et de la surveillance aux communications vocales, à la navigation et à l'information aéronautique.

Indra opère en Afrique depuis 1995, avec des bureaux au Maroc, en Algérie, au Kenya, en Libye, au Sénégal, au Mozambique, en Afrique du Sud et en Zambie.

« Nos solutions ont été des piliers dans la plupart des pays avec des projets de premier plan dans les marchés clés de l'économie du continent », affirme Guillermo Rosello.

Cette année, la société a remporté le contrat de modernisation de la tour de contrôle de l'aéroport international Jomo Kenyatta du Kenya, permettant une coordination des vols à l'approche de JKIA et des aéroports d'Eastleigh et de Wilson.

La solution Indra Air Automation permettra à la Kenya Civil Aviation Authority de développer et de réorganiser son espace aérien de manière dynamique, sûre et efficace. Le pays pourra ainsi consolider sa position comme une plaque tournante régionale.



En Algérie, Indra a modernisé les infrastructures de gestion du trafic aérien, incluant le déploiement de systèmes de surveillance radar et coopératif pour le contrôle du trafic aérien (ADS-B). Ce projet placera l'Établissement National de la Navigation Aérienne à l'avant-garde mondiale en termes de sécurité, d'efficacité, de capacité et de respect de l'environnement.

Indra mène également des projets en Tunisie depuis douze ans.

Elle est présente au Maroc depuis deux décennies (collaborant depuis plus de dix ans avec ONDA), en Ouganda à travers le système d'information aux passagers (InSIGHT) à l'aéroport international d'Entebbe, au Nigéria (solutions comptabilité revenus), en Afrique du Sud (technologie numérique) et au Ghana (automatisation, surveillance et communication).

En parallèle, Indra a un programme de formation « smart start ».

Guillermo Rosello est convaincu que l'Afrique pourrait progresser plus rapidement que d'autres régions en matière de déploiement de nouvelles solutions de gestion du trafic aérien, en intégrant les opérations de drones pour la livraison de médicaments en milieu rural, la surveillance et la sécurité, et le contrôle des cultures. « La région est idéale aussi » pour l'adoption de nouveaux services mondiaux de surveillance et de communication par satellite. ■



Above: Earlier this year, Indra won the contract to modernise air traffic control at Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.

PICTURE: SHUTTERSTOCK



Left: Indra has provided a dense network of primary and secondary radar in Tunisia, like this facility at Sidi Zid.

PICTURE: INDRA

both technical and corporate tasks and forms an integral part of the company's culture.

“In our Algerian subsidiary, for example, we train young engineers and provide rapid advancement for them within the framework of our ‘smart start’ programme,” he explained.

Rosello admitted that the current Covid-19 pandemic, together with its effects on air traffic, had led to a slowdown in air traffic activity.

However, he was bullish about the future. “Africa occupies a privileged position for the adoption of new air traffic technologies and may even make more rapid progress than other regions during the deployment of new solutions in this field,” he said.

“Africa is a highly suitable geographical area for the implementation of unmanned air traffic

management solutions being integrated into conventional air traffic for the launch of large-scale drone operations. There are currently several countries in the region where drone operations have been deployed to deliver medicines to rural areas, perform surveillance and security tasks, crop control, etc.”

He added that the type of airports in several countries in the region make them ideal for the implementation of remote digital tower solutions to provide control services, thus maximising the safety of their operations at a very low cost.

“Africa is also the ideal region for the adoption of new global satellite surveillance and communications services, such as those to be offered by Indra's Startical network,” Rosello concluded. ■

UNE NOUVELLE PLATEFORME AÉROPORTUAIRE AU BÉNIN

Le Bénin devrait prochainement lancer son projet de construction du nouvel aéroport international de Glo-Djigbé. Ce projet aurait été confié à Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC). Par **Vincent Chappard**.

Il s'agit de l'un des projets emblématiques du gouvernement du Bénin. Le 29 juin dernier, le ministre de l'économie et des finances, Romuald Wagani, annonçait à l'assemblée nationale, que le projet de nouvel aéroport international de Glo-Djigbé était « bouclé » et que les travaux pouvaient démarrer.

L'aéroport serait situé dans la commune d'Abomey-Calavi. C'est AVIC qui serait le maître d'œuvre de cette plateforme aéroportuaire. Selon le groupe aéronautique, l'aéroport disposera d'un terminal qui pourra accueillir 1,6 millions de passagers annuellement.

Il disposera d'une piste de 250 mètres de long et 60 mètres de large. Une aérogare cargo est également prévue. Elle sera en mesure de traiter 12 000 tonnes de fret par an.

Une voie express serait également construite. Elle reliera l'aéroport à la Route des Pêches (un projet d'aménagement du territoire le long du littoral atlantique au sud du Bénin autour d'un axe routier de 40 km pour connecter Cotonou à Ouidah) au niveau de Cocotomey avec un corridor permettant de relier la frontière togolaise à la frontière nigérienne.

Par ailleurs, l'aéroport international Cardinal Bernadin Gantin de Cotonou a été certifié aux normes de l'OACI le 27 mai dernier.

Le gouvernement du Bénin a également donné son feu vert pour le démarrage de la deuxième phase des travaux de modernisation. ■



IMAGE: ADP

SUMMARY

GREEN LIGHT FOR NEW BENIN AIRPORT

Benin is set to begin construction of its flagship Glo-Djigbé International Airport project. According to Romuald Wagani, the country's minister of economy and finance, the airport at Abomey-Calavi, being built by the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), will comprise a passenger terminal for 1.6 million passengers annually, while the cargo terminal will handle 12,000 tonnes of freight each year.

A road expressway will link the airport to the Route des Pêches – a regional development project along the Atlantic coast in southern Benin – connecting Cotonou to Ouidah, with a corridor linking Togo to the Nigerian border. ■

DJIBOUTI TABLE SUR UN NOUVEAU HUB STRATÉGIQUE

L'autorité des ports et des zones franches de Djibouti (DPFZA) a choisi ADP Ingénierie et Egis pour la conception du nouvel aéroport international Al Haj Hassan Gouled Aptidon, à la hauteur des ambitions du pays. Par **Vincent Chappard**.

Ce projet aéroportuaire d'envergure s'inscrit dans le schéma de développement économique national, « Djibouti 2035 » et devrait transformer Djibouti en un hub dans la région.

Selon la DPFZA, cette plateforme aéroportuaire constitue

un maillon essentiel de cette vision de développement et vise à créer une synergie des transports, et à renforcer le secteur logistique du pays. Dotée d'un terminal cargo, elle servira de base pour le fret aéroportuaire et maritime.

Un protocole d'accord a été signé le 6 juin dernier entre la DPFZA et le tandem français ADP Ingénierie et Egis. Celui-ci vise à réaliser une étude (financée par les autorités françaises dans le cadre des protocoles Fasep) devant déboucher sur un plan

d'actions et un montage financier pour la construction du nouvel aéroport.

La future plateforme se situera à Bicidley dans la région d'Ali Sabieh, à environ 60 kilomètres de l'actuel aéroport international Ambouli. Il pourra traiter 1,5 million de passagers et 100 000 tonnes de fret aérien par an.

Pour ce projet, le Groupe ADP (via ADP Ingénierie) a proposé une nouvelle approche pour préparer un bouclage financier basé sur une organisation phasée du transfert d'activités associée à une analyse des différentes sources et montages financiers envisageables pour chaque composante de l'aéroport.

Les études ont démarré en juillet dernier et doivent durer cinq mois. Le projet devrait être lancé début 2022. ■



Accord entre DPFZA, ADP Ingénierie et Egis pour la conception du nouvel aéroport de Djibouti. IMAGE : DPFZA

SUMMARY

DJIBOUTI PLANS FOR 'STRATEGIC HUB'

The Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority (DPFZA) has selected ADP Ingénierie and Egis for the design of the new Al Haj Hassan Gouled Aptidon International Airport, writes *Vincent Chappard*.

This large-scale project – to be launched early next year – is part of the Horn of Africa state's national economic development plan, 'Djibouti 2035', and is intended to create a regional hub.

Equipped with a cargo terminal, the airport will serve as a location for both air and sea freight.

The hub, to be located in Bicidley, is around 60km from the current Ambouli Airport and will handle 1.5 million passengers and 100,000 tonnes of freight annually. ■

According to the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), Nigeria has 23 active domestic airlines, 554 licensed pilots, 913 licensed engineers and 1,700 cabin personnel. But, asks **Chukwu Emeke**, where are the required numbers of aircraft inspectors?

Inspection issues grow in Nigeria

There's no doubt that Nigeria currently has a problem in employing and retaining the required number of aircraft inspectors.

NCAA's inspectors are often experienced ex-private airlines' personnel, who were handsomely paid before exiting their companies.

However, because the regulatory body has an established pay structure that falls below the remuneration level they are used to, only a few such personnel are interested in joining or staying on the NCAA payroll.

Now stakeholders are concerned about the impact of such a vacuum on air safety and are demanding that the shortage be addressed.

NCAA's director general, Musa Nuhu, said the situation "is a global issue" that affects even Europe and America. He said the government could not pay the same rates as the airlines offer. However, he believed conditions could be put in place to make it attractive for people who wanted to spend 10 to 15 years of their active career life, rather than attracting only retirees from airlines.

Agreeing that the challenge is a global phenomenon, former NCAA director general, Harold Demuren, recommends "adequate funding for training". He expected a "good remuneration structure" that could attract and retain highly skilled personnel for the NCAA.

Femi Adeniji, chief operating officer of Tropical Arctic



ILLUSTRATION: ALASHI, ISTOCK

Logistics Ltd (TAL), which operates helicopter transport of personnel to offshore production platforms and drilling rigs, had his own view. "I think the way out is to get experienced safety-conscious pilots and put them on contract or, alternatively, get some who are experienced on the job and develop their careers," he said.

Nuhu prefers a right mix of "skilled elderly workers and the young upcoming ones" to "people who cannot offer more than five extra years because they had retired from active service". He said the high turnover rate of older retirees "affects the continuity of the system and makes it inefficient".

He added that there is an on-going "domestication of all inspector mandatory core courses", which almost 500 staff will complete in less than 18 months. "This will be at a fraction of the cost that would otherwise be taking several years to implement as foreign training," he concluded. ■

ANGOLA TO SET UP ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BUREAU

The Angolan parliament has approved a draft law that provides for the creation of a government agency responsible for the investigation of all aircraft accidents and aerial incidents in the country. **Oscar Nkala** reports.

Transport Minister, Ricardo de Abreu, says the new amendments to the Civil Aviation Act will correct national deficiencies in aviation safety management as the country pushes closer to full compliance with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) safety protocols.

The National Public Institute for Investigation and Prevention of Accidents and Incidents of Angola will be formed as soon as President Joao Lorenzo signs the amended bill into law.

The accidents investigations bureau is one of several Angolan Government projects aimed at improving the country's aviation safety management protocols in line with ICAO regulations.

An assessment report recently submitted to the ICAO by the Angolan Government said the current Angolan air navigation plan (AANP) does not comply with new modern methods.

"A new structure of air navigation is required and has to be re-designed," reads part of the report entitled 'Safety and Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency in the Luanda Flight Information Region' (FLIR).

The report said that, through the modernisation of the air navigation system, the government would restructure the AANP to include sections responsible for specific aspects of air navigation and aviation safety management.

Among other things, the report recommended the

implementation of plans to improve voice communications in order to eliminate communication gaps in Angolan airspace. Further, the Angola Government should also improve navigation aids for airport terminal routes within the Luanda FLIR.

□□□□□

At least three more updated air traffic surveillance systems are required to fully cover the Luanda FLIR. Presently, there is only one air traffic surveillance system for the whole Luanda flight region.

In June this year, the European Union banned all carriers certified by authorities with responsibility oversight of Angola from flying into Europe for non-compliance with aviation safety standards.

The affected airlines include Aerojet, Air Jet, Best Fly Aircraft Management, Heliang, SJL and Sonair. Only the state-owned TAAG Angola Airlines and Heli Malongo were cleared to fly into Europe. ■

Maxine Holman

Marcelle Nethersole speaks to the CEO of Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) South Africa.

1

■ Can you tell me a little about MAF South Africa?

MAF South Africa is part of an international organisation that started in 1945 after World War 2. We are a Christian mission organisation with a mandate to reach the most isolated people groups in the world, bringing help, hope and healing.

The MAF South Africa group started in the 1970s, flying in the Transkei (an unrecognised state in the south-eastern region of South Africa from 1976 to 1994), helping Christian medical doctors.

Today, we send mission pilots, engineers, managers, and teachers to remote parts of the world to help continue the work of reaching the isolated.

We also have a presence in South Africa, called Flying for Life, where we use aviation to reach communities that are cut off because of bad road infrastructure. We fly medical professionals into the Venda district of Limpopo, for example, to help with the very basic healthcare needs.

MAF South Africa currently has five pilots serving in different countries around the world. MAF worldwide has 127 pilots.

2

■ Can you give an example of MAF's work?

A medevac mission took place this April in a very isolated part of Papua New Guinea called Pyarulama. It is surrounded by mountains and fast flowing rivers. The only means of transportation is by air.

MAF had been called to help medevac a woman whose arms had been severely injured in a domestic violence incident; she was losing a lot of blood and it was a struggle for her to remain conscious. This was a life-or-death situation, one that MAF responded to immediately.

The MAF safety manager, who is also a pilot, was able to arrange the flight and, within 50 minutes, the aircraft and pilot were on the ground assisting the local people to help place the patient on the stretcher and into the aircraft.

Twenty minutes later they touched down in Kompian, where the patient was switched to an ambulance and rushed to the local hospital. These calls are not unusual and MAF is equipped to help in any situation.

3

■ I understand MAF also covers medical response and aid and development?

Yes, MAF does a lot of work around helping in the medical, aid and development field.

In South Africa we have a strong focus on the very rural parts of our country. Here we do eye doctor, cancer awareness, GP and dental campaigns/outreaches.

We look at areas of development too, seeing how we can enable further education, specifically for pre-school teachers and high school students. We work alongside partners who do the actual work, enabling them to reach those they would not normally be able to access because of bad road infrastructure.

We also have a disaster response team that gets involved in immediate relief. In the recent riots and looting in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), we were able to assist in flying supplies to people in need.

When people are cut off from normal everyday necessities MAF gets involved.

4

■ What fleet do you operate?

MAF's worldwide fleet of 123 aircraft consists of Cessna Caravans, C206s, Kodiaks, Amphibious C208s, PC-12s, GA8 Airvans, C182s, and C172s.

5

■ How is MAF supported financially?

MAF is reliant on individual, corporate, and church donations. There are cases where we charge a small fee for people to hop on one of our flights, but these fees are very low.

MAF would heavily subsidise all flights and this would come from donations that are raised by all our resourcing offices, of which there are more than 15.

6

■ What does a typical day involve in your role?

I wear two different hats – one for MAF, our worldwide reach, and one for Flying for Life, our local initiative.

Sometimes I find myself doing a bit of juggling, trying to ensure that both parts of the organisation are being effective and efficient in their mandates.

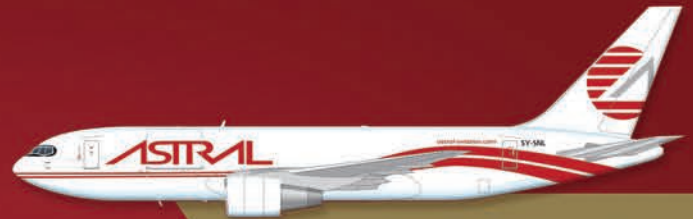
A typical day will be connecting with my team, mentoring, helping and guiding where necessary to build on their strengths, which will ultimately strengthen the organisation.

I also make sure I reach out to our amazing donors to thank them for their financial support, or I might be looking over large funding proposals ready to be submitted.

I work alongside our operations manager to ensure our flights take place and that the people on the ground get the help that they need.

My days are never dull.

“When people are cut off from normal everyday necessities MAF gets involved.”



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