

ISSUE 2, VOLUME 12: MAY – JULY 2020



ARABIAN AEROSPACE

THE MAGAZINE FOR AEROSPACE PROFESSIONALS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA AND TURKEY

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The second edition of the Kuwait Aviation Show was held under the patronage of HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in January. Patrick Dirksen and Frank Mink were there.

KUWAIT FLIES THE FLAG WITH COLOURFUL SHOW

During the spectacular four-day show, in excess of 60,000 visitors witnessed more than 60 aircraft and helicopters, either on the ground or in the air, with companies from 37 countries taking part.

The show was officially opened by a Kuwait Air Force (KAF) SA.330 Puma, carrying the Kuwaiti flag, and flanked by two AH-64D Apache helicopters.

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The Qatar Emiri Air Force skydive team followed with 30 para jumpers. Some carried large national flags of Kuwait and Qatar, plus portraits of both the Amir of Kuwait and the Emir of Qatar, while 16 others formed different formations and ignited fireworks in the sky.

The team, which consists of special forces members, has been operating for eight years. It recently switched from using AW139 helicopters to two new DHC-6-400 Twin Otter aircraft.

This was their first public performance using the new aircraft.

Team members make more than 500

jumps a year – in the winter from home base, Al Udaid, while in summer they move to Florida, US, because of the heat in Qatar.

Finishing the first flypast was a Kuwait Airlines Boeing 777-300ER, flanked by two KAF F/A-18 Hornets, accompanied by the Hawks of Saudi Air Force display team, the Saudi Hawks.

The Americans were out in force during the week, displaying an F-15 and two F-35s doing a high-speed pass. The crowd especially loved the newest 'stealth fighter', the F-35 Lightning II.

Also, an MV-22 Osprey showed the best of both worlds with its interesting combination of aircraft and helicopter design, creating large sand storms, while hovering right in front of the crowd.

Italian Air Force test pilot, Major Domenico G, flew an impressive daily display with his F-2000A Typhoon. As the KAF has 28 on order, this display was a glimpse of things to come.

Three weeks earlier, the first instrumented series production aircraft (ISPA 6), equipped with the KAF configuration, successfully completed its first flight in Italy. Initial deliveries to

Above left:
Showing the flag during the opening of the show.

Above:
A para jumper from the Qatari team carries the flag featuring a portrait of the Amir of Kuwait.

Above right:
Focusing in on helicopters with the Kuwaiti Police's newest edition, the H225 Super Puma (top), one of the KOC Helicopter Service's AW169s (centre), and the Kuwaiti Police and Air Ambulance (bottom).

Kuwait are expected in the last quarter of this year.

Another Italian F-2000A could be admired on the ground, with the C-27J Spartan, which acted as support aircraft, parked next to it.

Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) had announced it would show its newest turboprop trainer aircraft – the Hürku – both on the ground and in the air. Unfortunately this didn't happen. A Saudi F-15 was also billed on the daily flying programme but it also didn't show up.

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However, two aerial demonstrations teams – the Saudi Hawks and the UAE's Al Fursan – performed impressive routines on most days. On the ground, large commercial airliners, small general aviation aircraft, different helicopter operators and multiple military variations were present.

National operator, Kuwait Airways, which had celebrated its 65th birthday the month before, showed one of its two brand new Airbus A320neo aircraft, delivered as part of the running order of 10.



Above left:
Spectacular
formation jumping.

Above right:
Very tight formation
flying from the Saudi
Hawks.

Kuwait Airways expects to order the A350 next, as part of its strategy to become more competitive in the global aviation sector and help stimulate economic growth for Kuwait. The carrier announced a codeshare partnership with UAE national airline, Etihad, combining more than a dozen destinations worldwide.

Emirates showed the world's largest aircraft, the A380. This was adorned with special markings promoting the upcoming Expo 2020 that will be held in Dubai at the end of this year.

Gulf Air also showed an aircraft with special markings, in their case for the airline's 70th anniversary in March. The brand new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner also proudly mentioned the Bahrain Grand Prix, of which the airline is the main sponsor.

State-owned Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) was also at the show. It operates in remote areas doing high-risk work.

Because of the need for a rapid response to any type of emergency, KOC decided a year ago that a helicopter service would be vital. A dedicated helipad, Ahmadi Heliport, was built and opened in January 2019.

Three AW169 helicopters have been wet-leased from Falcon Aviation and a team of 17 pilots, nine engineers, and a few dozen other staff make sure one is on 24/7 search-and-rescue (SAR) standby.

Since the introduction, a year ago, they have been able to assist in two serious accidents and two oil spills, apart from many other regular transport tasks.



Another helicopter operator present was EMS Kuwait, showing one of its two Bell 429s. These are operated by the Ministry of Health, from a heliport in the centre of Kuwait City, and are wet leased from Kuwait International Aircraft Lease.

EMS Kuwait started in 2011 with two second-hand Bell 430s that were bought as a gap filler while waiting for two ordered new Bell 429s. One of the Bell 430s has been withdrawn from use while the other still acts as a back-up aircraft. If the current contract, which was due to end as *Arabian Aerospace* was going to press, is renewed, the company plans to acquire a third Bell 429 to replace the Bell 430.

The police helicopter department was also present with one of its trusted SA365 Dauphin helicopters and a new Airbus H-225, which could be seen leaving early on the first day of the show to carry out a border guard mission. It was back on the static park the next morning.

The KAF ground display featured an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter and a venerable SA330 Puma, still used for 24/7 SAR duties while replacement H-225s are currently being built in France.

One Kuwaiti C-17 could be seen flying operational missions during a couple of the days, and examples of the F/A-18 Hornet, KC-130J-30 Hercules, Hawk mk.64, Tucano and SA.341 Gazelle completed the KAF inventory.

The Qatar Emiri Air Force brought a C-130J Hercules and C-17 Globemaster III to the show, while Qatar Airways showed one of its A350-1000s, for which it was the global launch customer.

Qatar Airways also announced eight new destinations for its growing route network, bringing the total to 177. The next edition of the show is scheduled for January 19, 2022. ■

The first International Aviation and Defence Exhibition (IADE) in Tunisia took place at Djerba-Zarzis International Airport on the island of Djerba in March. Patrick Dirksen and Frank Mink report.

This inaugural show was deemed such a success that the organisers have already announced it will take place every two years for the next decade.

Kais Saied, president of the Republic of Tunisia, formally opened the exhibition and met with representatives of both national and international industries.

In total, 111 exhibitors, 38 participating countries and 43 official delegations attended the event, which the organisers described as an opportunity for many investors in the field of aviation and defence to hold business-to-business (B-to-B) and business-to-government (B-to-G) meetings.

There were many fruitful deals done, not least the Tunisian Air Force signing a \$240 million contract with Turkish Aerospace Industry (TAI) for six Anka-S unmanned aerial systems and three ground control stations.

The success of the show was confirmed by Brigadier General Mohamed Hajem, who led the Tunisian Air Force delegation at the event. "It opens the door to Africa," he said.

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The air force displayed aircraft in both the static and dynamic displays and one of the highlights was its C-130J-30 Hercules, a relatively new addition to the inventory.

The C-130J-30 Hercules is already heavily used as a multipurpose transport aircraft. One is often deployed to Mali in support of the UN mission there and, in early February, it was used to repatriate 12 Tunisian nationals from China because of the coronavirus.

The agile light-attack and reconnaissance OH-58D Kiowa helicopter was also showcased. It can be equipped with an impressive weapons load and sensor suite. One of its main tasks is to provide top cover for the UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter during missions.

Tunisian light aircraft manufacturer, Avionav, showcased its Rally aircraft as a low-cost surveillance platform. Avionav started a cooperation with Turkish company, Bayhar, to equip the Rally with sensors and ground link capabilities.

This new concept eliminates the requirement for an on-board controller as real-time data can be sent to a ground operator via a line-of-sight data link that has a range of up to 300km.



Little and large: The Avionav Evada amphibious aircraft prototype interested the crowds but the big draw was the Tunisian Air Force C-130J-30.

Tunisia show all set to run for a decade

In addition to two Rally aircraft, the company put its prototype Evada seaplane on the static display.

ABC Composites, from Mghira, Tunisia, specialises in patented prepreg products. It started to design and manufacture ultra-light motorised (ULM) aircraft and drones few years ago. The Senegalese Government will be the launch customer for the ABC Sparrow drone, the prototype of which is currently awaiting approval for first flight.

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The Tunisian Garde Nationale presented one of its three Bell 429 helicopters. These are used for a wide variety of tasks such as traffic monitoring; maritime surveillance; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); and support of the elite counter-terrorism tactical unit.

Czech-based Aero Vodochody pitched its L-39NG as a replacement for the aging

Displays of cooperation

The Royal Saudi Air Force aerobatic team, the Saudi Hawks, performed at IADE.

During the opening ceremony, the team flew their Hawk mk65s in formation while trailing smoke in the colours of the Tunisian national flag.

IADE was also the first show of the 2020 season for the Turkish Air Force's Solotürk F-16C demo team, which included a new manoeuvre called the 3D aileron roll.

L-59 Albatross fighters that are currently in the Tunisian Air Force inventory.

The L-39NG is a next-generation low-cost follow-up of the legacy L-39 that served in many African countries.

The US Air Force sent two F-16C Vipers, one C-130J Hercules, and a KC-135R tanker aircraft to underline the good security and defence cooperation between the countries.

Also, a brand new US Navy P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft was present.

Textron presented its latest Beech 250 model, equipped with a Proline cockpit. Current Beech 200 family operators in the sub-Saharan region report that the aircraft operates very well. Textron aims to extend its network to the western Sahara region.

Turkey, China and Pakistan took the opportunity to show their product portfolios, ranging from shipyards and aircraft overhaul capabilities, to small firearms production and cyber security. ■