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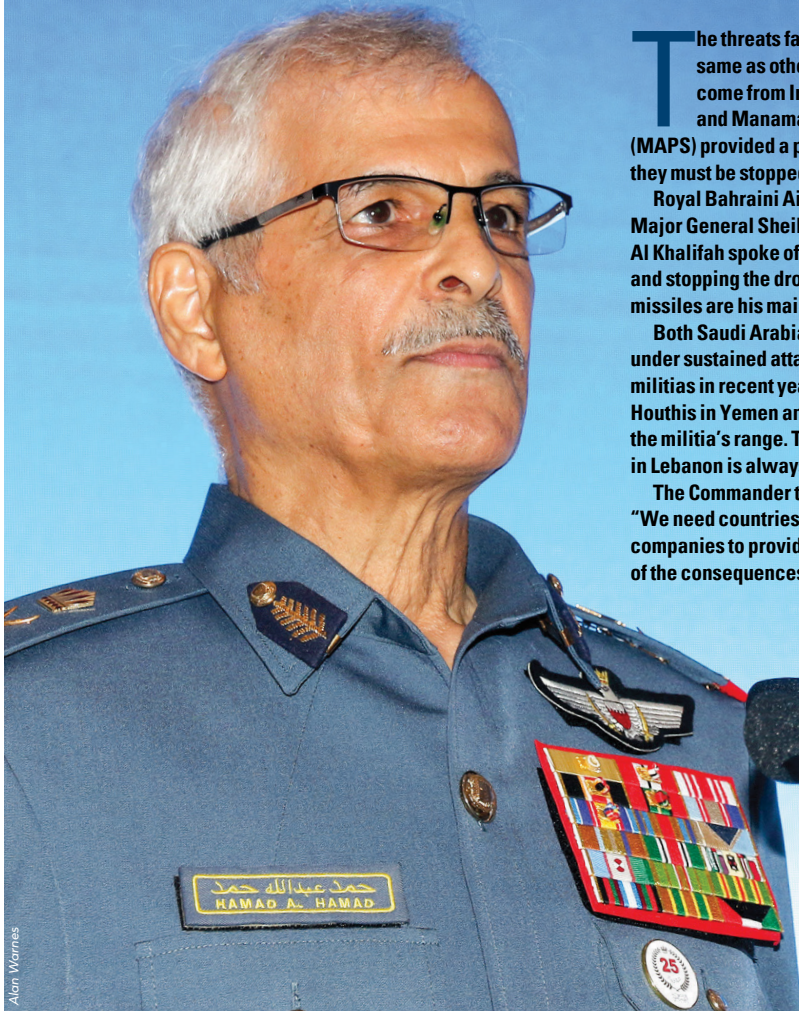


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DON'T FEAR THE CONSEQUENCES

RBAF commander's message to industry and governments



The threats facing Bahrain are the same as other GCC countries. They come from Iran and its proxy militias and Manama Air Power Symposium (MAPS) provided a platform to explain why they must be stopped.

Royal Bahraini Air Force Commander, Major General Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah Al Khalifah spoke of the challenges he faces, and stopping the drones and tactical ballistic missiles are his main priority.

Both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have come under sustained attack by Iranian-backed militias in recent years, mainly from the Houthis in Yemen and Bahrain is well within the militia's range. The threat from Hezbollah in Lebanon is always there too.

The Commander told the MAPS audience: "We need countries and aerospace companies to provide arms without the fear of the consequences. Today we see different

militias that don't recognise the UN, they have highly sophisticated weapons and move freely around countries that don't have a strong military. These attacks don't just affect the oil and gas industry [as it has in the past] but the maritime domain too.

"Because of their weapons, they can drag the region into wars and so it's important to defend ourselves, with enhanced defensive systems and weapons that can destroy these militias and their systems, so we can protect civilians in coordination with the UN. We also need to hinder and stop these militias from gaining access to their finances, with international and regional support."

The RBAF is in the midst of ramping up the protection of Bahraini skies, with Patriots now operational in country since earlier in the year, while the new F-16 Block 70 fleet will be operational next year to work with the current fleet of Block 40s. ▲

RBAF Commander Major General Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah Al Khalifah spoke at MAPS about the need to defend Bahrain and the GCC against Houthi drones and tactical ballistic missiles



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Call my 'Buff': B-52 makes debut regional show of strength

A massive eight-engined Boeing B-52 'Buff', synonymous with long bombing missions over Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan is making its first ever appearance at a Middle East airshow.

It comes at a time when the US is keen to provide a show of force and reassure its allies in the region, more than 60 years after the huge bomber made its first flight.

It will be just one of 125 aircraft expected to be attending this year's BIAS, from both the military and civil sector. In addition to the Royal Bahraini Air Force, there is a sizeable military presence from many of its allies.

Pakistan has sent three JF-17A/C Thunders that includes the first JF-17C Thunder for the PAF's No 8 Squadron 'Haiders' which are replacing veteran Mirage VPA2/3s that fulfilled the maritime strike role. The JF-17C made its public debut at the World Defense Show at Riyadh, in Saudi Arabia in February.

India is represented by the Sarang aerobatic team featuring four HAL Dhruv helicopters, Saudi Arabia is showing off a specially marked Eurofighter Typhoon and an F-15SA Eagle, in addition to the Saudi Hawks aerobatic team, while there is an F-16E and Mirage 2000-9 from the United Arab Emirates.

The first US aircraft to arrive was a MH-53E Sea Dragon from the US Navy's Helicopter Countermeasures Squadron 15 (HM-15) at nearby Muharraq. It was subsequently joined by an anonymous looking USAF



Images: Billypix

C-130J Hercules which will highlight the aircraft's medevac capabilities.

According to the organisers we can expect a lot more from the US including a US Navy Boeing P-8A Poseidon anti-submarine warfare aircraft. All of the different air forces will also be illustrating their pilots flying skills in the three hour air display.

One of the highlights will undeniably be Mark Jefferies' Global Stars aerobatic team that see the four Extra 330SCs putting on an awesome evening display that includes pyrotechnics being



launched off the wings of these extremely agile sports aircraft.

The team, fully certified in the UK, appeared at BIAS 22, when the watching crowd fell under the spell of this mesmerising routine.

▲ Top: The Boeing B-52 'Buff' parks for its first Middle East appearance

Above: Landing at Sakhir yesterday



Visit our editorial office at K65 in the Exhibition Hall, or email ella@aerocomm.aero

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Director of content

Alan Peaford

Managing Editor

Mark Pilling

Editorial Alan Dron, Chloe Greenbank, Marcelle Nethersole, Alan Warnes

Imagery James Robbins, Billypix

Design/production

Amelia Clark

Printed by Al Hilal Group

Publisher

Mark Brown

mark.brown@aviationweek.com

Circulation

abi.ahrens@aviationweek.com

Marketing

elizabeth.sisk@aviationweek.com

Display advertising

grant.lee@aviationweek.com

Distribution

erving.dockery@aviationweek.com

Advertising TIMES

Aerospace Publishing Ltd
3-4 Rumsey House, Locks Hill,
Rochford, Essex SS4 1BB, UK
+44 (0) 1702 53 0000

Content Aerocomm Limited,
Norths, Rectory Road, Orsett,
Essex RM16 3JU, UK
+44 (0) 208 133 3420

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Commander outlines threats facing Bahrain's defence

Brigadier General Abdulla Mohammed AlNaimi, the Air and Missile Defence Commander tasked to defend Bahrain's skies and to protect its citizens, outlined in detail the potential threats in a presentation at yesterday Manama

Air Power Symposium run along-side the show. "Our main threat is from ballistic tactical missiles and drones from Iranian-backed militias, like the Houthis in Yemen in the south, and from militias in the north.

"Integration with GCC countries and other allied nations like the US, is very important for us and we use long range Patriots and medium range Hawk systems to do that. The THAAD could be a project for the future."

The Patriots which started operations earlier this year are owned by Bahrain but operated by US personnel are helping to deter the threats right now. A video shown by one of Brigadier General Abdulla Mohammed AlNaimi's team of a single drone attack on an Israeli base illustrated the threats that Bahrain faces. It occurred just a few miles from the southern Lebanon border, killed four soldiers and injured another 66.

A \$US 20,000 drone evaded Israel's \$50 million Iron Dome anti-missile battery system. The drone known as the Mirsad 1 by Hezbollah, was effectively one of 20 twin-tailed Ababils recently supplied by Iran. Constructed with a combination of plastic and steel components, it is lightweight and by ensuring stealth, reduced its radar signature and visibility.

With its rocket assisted take off the Mirsad 1 is being launched by militias from safe distance, and with a forward looking infra-red camera can send intelligence back to the militia commander. Just behind the camera is a warhead packed with TNT that can make a significant impact if used for offensive operations. It all helped to illustrate the threats that Bahrain and its GCC allies face in this uncertain world.



The RSAF 'Saudi Hawks' team are bidding farewell to their Hawk Mk 65s at Bahrain show

Saudi Hawks' farewell flight for Mk 65

BIAS 24 marks the last international air show for the BAE Systems Hawk Mk 65s of the Royal Saudi Air Force's 'Saudi Hawks' display team.

The seven jet trainers making up the team, built in the mid-1990s, made their debut display in January 1999, but are now set to be withdrawn from the show circuit. They are being replaced with newer more advanced Mk165s, assembled at the BAE Systems facility in Dhahran, in the desert kingdom.

The aircraft will come from the

second half of a batch of 22 that have not just been assembled locally, but also include a Head up Display built by AEC and a canopy built by Al Salam – companies that are now part of Saudi Arabia Military Industries (SAMI).

A ceremony to celebrate the last Hawk Mk165 coming off the Dhahran production line took place at this year's World Defense Show in Riyadh in February, and saw one of the new aircraft displayed for the first time wearing the team's new style green and white colours.

Understandably it's a source

of national pride that the Hawks set to fly with the team have been produced locally.

The Hawks will be flying each day this year at Bahrain - a clear highlight for the flying display.

However, this is not the final goodbye. The last Mk 65 air show will take place in Riyadh before the end of the year, and the pilots will then start training on the Mk 165s.

As a result, the 'Saudi Hawks' team will not fly in 2025, and make its public debut at Riyadh's World Defense Show (WDS) in February 2026.



RBAF Air and Missile Commander Brigadier General Abdulla Mohammed AlNaimi with his two-man team provided an insight into dangers from deadly militia drones

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“If you add up all the incremental benefits we bring to our Trent engines through continued innovation, they make up a substantial difference,” explains Rory Clarkson, Engineering Associate Fellow – Engine Environmental Protection at Rolls-Royce.

In 2024, we announced a £1 billion multi-year investment in further engine improvements, some of which will help to double the time on wing for the toughest environments for our Trent XWB-97, as well as generating a 50% improvement in benign environments.

Now better durability, even in the toughest environments

The Trent XWB-97 is our highest thrust Trent engine, making it our hottest too. For engineers, this spurred research into how to keep our engines cool and operational in the hot and harsh environments of the Middle East – a popular route for customers. The build-up of desert sand, or mineral dust, is a common problem for engines operating in these regions. Densest at altitudes of up to 15,000 to 20,000 feet, most of the damage is caused during take-off and climb, when the engine is at its hottest.

“During these flight phases, dust gets drawn into the engine core, broken up into smaller pieces and eventually melts onto the hot turbine blades,” explains Rory. “This molten rock, described as Calcium Magnesium Alumino Silicate or CMAS, can seep between the material components of the turbine blades as they expand and contract in the changing temperatures. Over time, this breaks down the turbine blade thermal barrier – meaning more frequent servicing and downtime for the aircraft.”

At Rolls-Royce, we’ve developed and tested an innovative new coating that increases the lifetime of these thermal barriers and extends time on wing by up to 30%. “The coating is made up of a gadolinium zirconate which interacts with the CMAS to increase its viscosity, so it doesn’t penetrate the material in the same way.”

Testing a solution tailored to our customers’ needs

Developing a coating this protective meant understanding the workings of the CMAS itself and how its chemical make-up changed as it travelled through an engine. Together with geologists and professors from the University of Manchester, our teams created a dust that would help simulate the conditions of the Middle East.



The testing process involved various stages of monitoring the impact of the CMAS on hot materials of up to 1,400 degrees Celsius, then as the materials increased and decreased in temperature, and eventually as a full engine test at our Testbed 80 facility in Derby. “We ran what we call rainbow tests, applying different standards of the coating to the 64 turbine blades to assess the comparative results,” explains Rory. “We were able to look at the structure of the blades in detail to give us the confidence to then deliver this as a product.”

Keeping operators in the Middle East flying for longer

Through our vast aerospace heritage and experience, as well as through the substantial data gathered through our advanced engine health monitoring systems, we’ve built a deep understanding of the full lifecycle behaviour of our engines, meaning we can pass on that confidence to airlines.

For our customers operating in regions like the Middle East, investments like these will deliver the long-term benefit of reducing servicing and overhauls, keeping them flying more reliably for longer.

Our innovative CMAS coating is already going into service for airline customers. Alongside these improvements, our £1 billion investment will continue to deliver a Durability Enhancement package for Trent 1000 and Trent 7000, alongside a fuel burn enhancement package for the Trent XWB-84, doubling durability for some engines, increasing time on wing across the portfolio and ensuring Trent engines remain the most efficient in the market.

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Tony Smith,
Chief Operations
Officer, Bahrain
Airport Services

Behind the scenes at the show

As the official ground handler for Bahrain Airshow, Bahrain Airport Services (BAS) began preparations for the show back in January, refurbishing ground services equipment (GSE) and readying the site for the event.

Overseeing ground operations for the airshow while simultaneously managing operations at Bahrain International Airport is no small feat for BAS Chief Operations Officer, Tony Smith, who leads a workforce of around 2,500 staff and manages 2,000 pieces of GSE to support up to 40,000 flights a year at Bahrain Airport. “It is a massive undertaking that requires extensive preparation and coordination,” revealed Smith.

“Our teams will be working 14 to 15-hour days this week to maintain safe, efficient operations,” Smith shared. Earlier in November, 62 loaders transported 52 pieces of

GSE to Sakhir Airbase, with a team of 75 on-site staff managing ground handling services. BAS expects between 90 and 100 aircraft to be positioned at Sakhir for the airshow with Tuesday marking the busiest day, featuring 62 arriving aircraft – including commercial carriers, flight display teams and military aircraft.

One of the biggest challenges on the ground is ensuring the precise positioning of aircraft, which sometimes requires up to 18 aircraft to be tightly arranged on one stand, demanding careful safety measures.

The BAS team will also supply 8,500 meals during the show, while Smith noted that a highlight this year will be the focus on GSE following agreements made at Farnborough International Airshow.

Having invested approximately 4.5 million Bahraini Dinars (US\$11.9 m) in new GSE over the last two years, BAS will showcase

its new ground vehicles including a fleet of electric vehicles and equipment such as golf carts for dispatchers, baggage tugs and conveyor belts, demonstrating BAS’ commitment to sustainable operations.

With plans to expand its presence beyond Bahrain, Smith emphasised the airshow provides BAS a valuable opportunity to demonstrate its ground service capabilities to a global audience. This week however, Smith’s focus remains firmly on ensuring smooth, safe smooth operations – a task made possible by extensive teamwork.

“Look behind the scenes, you have procurement, IT, caterers and ground handlers all working together. The logistical feat of simultaneously running an international airshow and a major airport is testament to BAS’ operational capabilities and teamwork,” Smith said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Counter UAS and Cyber-security partnership deal

A partnership to enhance air and space security is being announced today at the Bahrain Airshow.

AI-based collective defense cybersecurity company, IronNet, and counter-UAS technology specialist, Asterion, are revealing a partnership to protect critical infrastructure through an integration of AI-based cybersecurity and counter UAS solutions.

There is a growing need to enhance defence capabilities against unauthorised and hostile drones, and the partnership will strengthen the protection of critical infrastructure, urban environments, and national borders.

The collaboration combines IronDome’s real-time cyber threat detection and coordinated response with Asterion’s drone detection and tracking systems, protecting airspace and critical assets from potential threats.

“Our partnership with Asterion represents a paradigm shift in how we approach critical infrastructure protection,” said Linda Zecher, CEO of IronNet. “By embracing the convergence of cyber and aerial threat detection and defence, governments and organisations can ensure a more comprehensive and effective approach to safeguarding critical infrastructure and national interests.”

Asterion can be found at the C5 Capital chalet A11.

On the ground: Otokar shows range

Turkey’s global land systems manufacturer Otokar is at the show displaying its ARMA 6x6, COBRA and URAL vehicles. The company will also take the opportunity during BIAS to inform visitors about its own design and production of armoured military vehicles family along with its turret systems, as well as its capabilities in the field of land systems.

The listed NATO and United Nations supplier manufactures a range of defence industry products including 4x4, 6x6, 8x8 tactical wheeled armoured vehicles, tracked armoured vehicles, unmanned armoured vehicles as well as turret systems, using its own technology, design and applications. Its products are recognised for their survivability, superior mobility and modularity.



Otokar is at the show displaying its ARMA 6x6, COBRA and URA vehicles at the show



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LEADERS AREN'T BORN. THEY'RE ENGINEERED.

Bahrain is determined to find a successful formula for its aviation ecosystem, with Gulf Air at the centre, to give strong connectivity for this island state. Jeffrey Goh, CEO of Gulf Air Group, talked to Mark Pilling

Gulf Air's formula one

Jeffrey Goh has landed at Gulf Air at a critical time in its history as the Middle East's first commercial carrier prepares to celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2025.

From its glory days in the 1970s and 1980s, Gulf Air has struggled for over a decade to find a profitable and sustainable niche in an increasingly competitive region. CEOs have come and gone regularly, as have a parade of restructuring plans. None has worked.

Goh, who arrived to lead Gulf Air Group from 16 years at the Star Alliance, the final six as its CEO, was appointed as Gulf Air Group CEO in January 2023.

The Gulf Air Group is a new construct, conceived by the government in October 2022, bringing Gulf Air, Bahrain Airport Company, and affiliates including the Gulf Aviation Academy and its MRO business, under a single management structure.

The Bahraini Government is determined to find a successful strategy so the state's aviation assets can deliver on its Economic Vision 2030, which includes promoting the Kingdom's tourism and its role as an important regional trading and logistics hub.

"I think it's a unique structure," said Goh, speaking in an interview at Routes World 2024, the airline-airport networking event that was hosted by Bahrain in October.

"We know in this industry how often the airlines and airports don't see eye to eye, but being together has allowed us to explore more seamless opportunities, whether the minimum connecting time or transfer processes," he outlined.

Having a single leader makes the group better placed as it drives towards two key missions, said Goh. "One is to become a positive contributor to the GDP of the Kingdom, and the other is to increase the international brand of Bahrain and Gulf Air."

With Gulf Air representing about 75% of the group's revenues, deciding on a strategy for the airline has been paramount. "We spent a lot of time navel-gazing, and we have come up with two very clear strategic pillars for the airline.

"One is about connectivity and the other is about customer service excellence," said Goh, with examples of the latter being free Wi-Fi on board and the ability to order meals 24 hours in advance of a long-haul flight.

Today Gulf Air serves 60 destinations and will add a quarter more over the coming 5 years. Recent additions include Shanghai and Guangzhou, Munich and Baghdad.

However, Gulf Air's network "recalibration" means "there are markets where we will withdraw because they no longer make sense," said Goh.

Subject to aircraft availability, Goh is bringing in a more rational

structure to its long-haul network. "You will see in 5 years a very different network proposition [from Gulf Air]," he said.

One of the airline's targets is to resume service to the USA, with approval for this being sought from the US authorities for a potential start in 2025.

Simplified fleet

One of Goh's major bugbears is aircraft unavailability, in common with many other carriers. "And I don't think that this situation is going to improve, at least for the next 2-3 years," he added.

Gulf Air is especially affected by issues with its fleet of 10 Rolls-Royce Trent-powered 10 Boeing 787-9s with 2-3 of them grounded at any time.

The carrier has simplified its fleet down to the 787s for its wide-body services and Airbus A320s for its narrowbody fleet. It has 32

A320s in operation with another six to be delivered in addition to a further two 787s in the next few years.

The airline does not need further narrowbodies, but it may need "a few more" widebodies, said Goh.

Despite these challenges, the substantial task of melding the Gulf Air Group into one force, and the large and competitive airlines in the region it comes up against, Goh's initial view when he took the job that Bahrain can compete for its share of traffic growth has strengthened.

"Size isn't everything. Just because you have a large airport doesn't mean necessarily that it is the best experience," he said, pointing out that his personal best curb to gate time is seven minutes at Bahrain International Airport.

Asked about his ambition for Gulf Air in the coming 18 months or so, Goh has a clear vision. "By the end of 2025 the message will be out there of the seriousness of our network, and we will have redefined our customer service proposition on the ground and on board, including our loyalty proposition," he said.

"From an airline perspective, we want to address the financial performance very robustly," he explained. "The group has very significant targets – revenue and cost. Bottom line, the target is the airline needs to be better than where it is today," said Goh.

The group CEO would not be drawn into predicting when Gulf Air could make a welcome return to the black, but he finished by noting that new airline CEOs typically have a 3-year lifespan on a turnaround mission.

That would put breakeven in 2027 at the earliest. This is well past the carrier's 75th birthday, but if Goh and Gulf Air's owners keep strong to their disciplined approach they might succeed where plenty have failed. ▲

Aviation central to Bahrain's big vision

Bahrain is making a determined effort to create a sustainable air transport system in this island nation. Mark Pilling reports

Bahrain has a plan. The kingdom has armed itself with a sparkling new airport terminal, a holding group that brings the airline and airport actors under one umbrella and a flag carrier being resized and restructured to finally make money. Most critically there is a government committed to whipping its aviation industry into shape.

It is a plan many before Bahrain have taken, using aviation as a catalyst for economic and social development. "Here in the Middle East, we have been witnessing an unprecedented transformation in aviation," explained HE Mohammed bin Thamer Al Kaabi, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, Kingdom of Bahrain, speaking to delegates at the Routes World airline-airport networking event, hosted by Bahrain in early October.

"Our Gulf region in particular has emerged as central hub on the global aviation landscape, with its airports and operators driving significant advancement," he said.

The problem for Bahrain is that it has gone downwards in the Gulf's aviation pecking order in recent decades, overtaken by the richer and more aggressive cities of Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha and soon Riyadh.

Bahrain's plan is not to try and compete with its boisterous neighbours, but rather carve out an existence that keeps the kingdom on the map, captures its fair share of a growing market, and drives the economy forward.

The first act was to update its airport infrastructure: the \$1.1 billion terminal opened in early 2021 with a capacity of 14 million passengers annually.

The kingdom built the Gulf's first international airport in 1927, said Al Kaabi. "Fast forward to 2021 when we proudly unveiled our new state-of-the-art passenger

"Here in the Middle East, we have been witnessing an unprecedented transformation in aviation"

HE MOHAMMED BIN THAMER AL KAABI
MINISTER OF
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE,
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN



terminal, a facility designed to enhance both passenger experience and operational efficiency," he explained.

"This modern terminal reaffirms Bahrain's spot on the global aviation map, positioning us as a premier hub for leading airlines and the global air freight operators."

The second act is the government creating the appropriate policy environment to encourage air transport.

Economic growth

"Our Open Sky policy fosters competition and facilitates the entry of new airlines creating a dynamic aviation market that benefits both consumers and businesses alike," said Al Kaabi.

"This aligns with the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030, recognizing that increased air travel is a powerful enabler for broader economic growth, attracting investment, hosting tourism and creating new

employment opportunities across various sectors."

Air transport is central to Bahrain's roadmap for sustainable economic growth. Moreover, events like the Bahrain International Air Show and Routes World align with the Kingdom's desire to attract visitors as part of its tourism strategy.

"Our goal to attract world-class conferences and exhibitions by convening aviation leaders from every corner of the globe showing Bahrain's unique ability to welcome the world," said HE Fatima bint Jaffer Al Sairafi, Minister of Tourism.

"We are opening new doors for the aviation sector while positioning Bahrain as a leader in global tourism," she stated.

To achieve these lofty ambitions, the third crucial act of Bahrain's leadership was a recognition of the need to organise the important actors, so they all sing from the same hymn sheet.

This led to the move, in Octo-

ber 2022, by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain, deciding to put all the country's aviation assets under one roof for the first time.

This brought Gulf Air, Bahrain Airport Company, and affiliates including the Gulf Aviation Academy and its MRO business, under The Gulf Air Group. This is led by former Star Alliance CEO Jeffrey Goh, who was appointed Group CEO in January 2023.

Gulf Air, which represents about 75% of the Group's revenues, has struggled for years to find a profitable operational model.

Al Kaabi said: "Our vision for Bahrain goes beyond just being a stop over point...our ambitious target of attracting 100 destinations by 2026 underscores our dedication to expand our network and increase connectivity and strengthen Bahrain's position as a regional and global aviation powerhouse." ▲



Jeffrey Goh is the CEO of Gulf Air and the CEO of Gulf Air Group



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New RBAF aircraft but F-16 Block 70 no-show

Not surprisingly the Royal Bahraini Air Force has a big presence in the static display. But hang on, there is no sign of a brand-new Lockheed Martin F-16 Block 70 that the RBAF started taking delivery in March. Nine of the 16 jets, made up of ten single-seat F-16Cs and six F-16Ds ordered by Bahrain, have been delivered so far to Isa Air Base.

There is though, another relatively new aircraft on show - one of its five-seater Bell 505s, being used for helicopter pilot training. Bell Textron announced on March 15 last year that the ‘first of three’ had been delivered, which carried the serials 1001, 1002 (the one on show) and 1003, that are operated by 10 Squadron based at Rifa. It is unclear how many are on order.

The Bell 505 was designed for the utility, executive/passenger and law enforcement markets but more are now being delivered as military trainers.

The RBAF became the third operator of what was originally termed the Jet Ranger X in the Middle East after the UAE’s Horizon International Flight Academy that flies 12 of them out of its Al Ain facility. The Royal Jordanian Air Force is now operating ten, with the last five being delivered in June this year.

Another relatively new acquisition in the static is a Bell AH-1Z Viper known as the ‘Zulu’ – one of 12 delivered in the past



Alon Wornes

▶ One of three new Bell 505s, used by the Royal Bahraini Air Force for training helicopters, arrives at BIAS 24

two and a half years. Again, like the F-16 Block 70 the RBAF was the launch foreign customer of the AH-1Z in 2020, which was followed by the Czech Republic in 2019. Sitting alongside this new edition of the very successful AH-1 Cobra is an older AH-1FB, one of 17 upgraded by Turkish Aerospace Industries under a veil of secrecy between 2017 and 2020, at a time when relations between Turkey and Bahrain were not as good as they are now.

Look who’s talking...

Visitors to BIAS will be entertained every afternoon by the military aircraft and display teams, which this year showcases the likes of the RBAF Copra Zolo from Bell, RSAF Typhoon, Mirage 2000 & F16, Saudi Hawks, Boeing P-8 Poseidon flypast and the Indian Air Force’s Sarang display team.

However, the display wouldn’t be as thrilling and informative if it wasn’t for the commentary.

The man behind that is Stratton Richey, a former British Airways Captain who has been commentating here since its launch in 2010.

“I actually started commentating and became a national aerobatic

judge in the UK before I learnt to fly,” explained Richey. “I has just joined the army when I happened to meet a guy on a train who commentated at air shows, and he knew my uncle Paul Richey who wrote the book ‘Fighter Pilot.’ Through him I went to Biggin Hill in England in 1976 and met Jock

Maitland, who was the first civilian director there, and he asked if I would like to do the morning announcements – and it basically all started from there.”

Richey has been the ‘voice’ of the air display at the Farnborough Airshow for almost 50 years, and also commentates at other major air shows.

With a passion for aviation, he started off flying for the Coast Guard, then on to low level photographic flights in a twin-engine Seneca CA 34, then with British Air ferries on the Vickers Viscount – which is where he got his first command at the age of 27. He then went on to charter flights before ending up as Captain of ‘Queen of the Skies’ a British Airways Boeing 747.

Richey said he has an affiliation with the Kingdom after coming here in 1988 on his first long-haul flight as a pilot.

“I just love the Kingdom and the people here,” he said. “As to the flying display here at the show, visitors will be treated to a really exciting and diverse display, from a mix of nations.”



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▶ Stratton Richey – the voice of the show – has been commentating here since its launch in 2010

GROWING PLANES

How teenage Bahrain show is achieving maturity

Yousif Mohamed Mahmoud, director general of BIAS, looks out at the Sakhir Airbase show ground as stand builders carry timber and tools, while tugs position aircraft on the expanding static display.

He has the smile of a proud father. And no wonder. Fifteen years ago he was part of the team that launched the show. He laughs at my analogy of parenthood.

“It is true,” he said. “It is my baby, but now it is growing up.

“It’s not yet totally adult, but it is a teenager level. Growing year after year. We get more enquiries, more attention and the show is moving

well. Slowly but steady. So, it’s very important for us. If you compare to some other countries and some other shows which happen in the region, they start and disappear. So at least we’ve been continuing now for 14 years.”

This message is one that Mahmoud will emphasise to His Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain, who will officially open the show today.

“I think the message is about the momentum of the air show and how it is going forward. This is an opportunity to show how Bahrain is open for business and how we

have grown the trust of companies, delegations and trade visitors. This is the success of statehood. We managed to bring more delegations and more aircraft onto the static display, which is much higher than in the past.”

Mahmoud said there would be more than 220 official delegates from 54 countries and more than a hundred aircraft from large to small and both military and civil.

He said that geopolitical issues in the region had not affected the show’s plans. “Bahrain is a friendly country with no enemies. We are safe here and we have seen great support from our exhibitors and trade visitors

registering for the show,” he said.

“Our international positioning has continued to grow and grow within the market,” said Mahmoud. “We are thrilled to be welcoming leaders from across the world to Bahrain again, including Lockheed Martin, Rolls-Royce, Thales, Leonardo, CFM, DHL, Indra, BAE System, Otokar, DFS Aviation Joramco, Alpha Star, Al Ola Aviation, DHL Worldwide and Gulf Air, within our 40 luxury chalets and increased exhibition hall.”

A key element of the show is the associated conferences taking place in the exhibition hall and open to all delegates, exhibitors and visitors.

The show’s conferences feature Airlines and Airports and another on Space. Tomorrow will include Defence Technology and the human capital prospects including the empowerment of women in aviation.

“These subjects are very important,” Mahmoud said. “This is our future and inspiring and motivating our youth will ensure that Bahrain has a place in the industry moving forward.” ▲



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“It is my baby, but now it is growing up. It’s not yet totally adult, but it is a teenager level. Growing year after year. We get more enquiries, more attention and the show is moving well. Slowly but steady”

YOUSIF MOHAMED MAHMOUD
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF BIAS

▶ Yousif Mahmoud looks out with paternal pride as the show sets up for today’s opening

STRENGTH THROUGH PERFORMANCE



Otokar



Andrew Simons
– CEO,
EAS

EAS eyes growth in the Middle East

Building on its success in the UK and Europe, European Airline Solutions (EAS) is actively pursuing growth in the Middle East's aviation market with plans to expand its footprint in the region by establishing a regional office in Dubai's free zone.

A rapidly growing group of companies specialising in ground support equipment (GSE) for the aviation sector, EAS designs, manufactures and refurbishes GSE for commercial maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) operations and fixed base operators (FBOs), including the likes of Harrods Aviation, XLR and Signature Flight Support.

Offering a one-stop shop for aviation support services, the group also incorporates European Airline Support, providing maintenance service schedules and has a recruitment arm - European Recruitment Services, to meet the demand

for skilled engineers across the sector.

Peter Simons, EAS CEO, explained that the company's participation at this year's show "is a strategic move that will enhance local access to EAS' comprehensive range of ground support equipment (GSE), maintenance services and recruitment solutions."

The company plans to introduce its high-quality, cost-effective GSE solutions as an alternative to traditional suppliers, targeting tier-one MROs and FBOs in the region.

It is also showcasing its Air Tool portal, which aims to streamline asset procurement, making it easier for airlines and operators to access critical equipment such as engine stands and specialised tooling.

"By establishing a presence in the region, we really hope to push the EAS brand," he said.

Bliss-Fox powers up to assist mobility

Exhibitor Bliss-Fox has been designing and manufacturing a wide range of aircraft ground services equipment for the last 55 years.

"Our equipment includes push back tractors, including our A380 capable FOX-70D model, cargo and baggage tractors, passenger stairs and conveyor belt loaders," said Duncan Cox, sales manager EU and Middle East, pictured below.

Its latest product is the Ambulift, which Cox said 'helps and dignifies' the boarding and deplaning of passengers with reduced mobility. Cox explained that it is offered in both diesel and electric versions.

"We offer all our products in both, but the most popular is still diesel with 70%," he said. "The problem with electric power tends to be lack of infrastructure at the airports, particularly the small ones, such as Sharjah, as they simply don't have enough power to charge the equipment. However, things are certainly moving in the right direction to allow for electric."

Following an acquisition of Bliss-Fox by Panus Assembly in 2014, the company has also expanded services to include the refurbishment of GSE, rental and lease options, and on-site maintenance support.

The company already has a strong presence in the region with its products in service at airports in Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Oman. "We also have one unit here in Bahrain and pleased to say that we are in meetings with Bahrain Airport Services during the show for potentially more," said Cox.



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Kallman launches new concept to give defence exposure

With a growing number of shows around the world, countries like the USA with its strong focus on exports face a challenge in being at so many places at the same time.

But at Bahrain, Kallman Worldwide, which hosts the US Pavilion, is introducing a new concept which will be rolled out at shows around the world.

"The Defence Capability Showcase is being launched here," said Peter McKenna, vice president, business development for Kallman.

"It allows our companies to be at three places at once."

The pavilion allows Brand USA to have a presence and company representatives can hold briefings, and organisations like the US Chamber of Commerce, or even offer the host nation's US Ambassador a base to meet key contacts.

"This initiative has come as a direct result of industry wanting to reach these different markets," McKenna said.



Peter McKenna
introducing
the new
concept at
Bahrain
show

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Joramco takes first Bahrain pitch

Joramco's soon-to-be-opened Hangar 7 is the latest phase of a major expansion in capacity for the firm.



Joramco is marking over a decade of support for Bahrain's flag carrier Gulf Air with its first show presence here, Fraser Currie, CEO of the Amman, Jordan-based MRO firm, one of the industry's largest global independent aircraft maintenance said.

"Our relationship with Gulf Air goes back to 2009. We perform all the heavy maintenance checks on both main types in its fleet, namely Airbus A320neos and Boeing 787s," explained Currie. "Since 2009 we have done over 240 heavy MRO visits for Gulf Air."

"The two companies have a very trusting relationship which has developed into a strategic partnership where we constantly work to enhance MRO turnaround times, with top-class quality standards and adding and adapting capabilities as required by Gulf Air," said Currie.

"Exhibiting here is an opportunity to support Gulf Air and meet and greet our customers and we find airshows are attractive for international visitors," added Currie, who knows Bahrain well having previously been CEO of local cargo operator Texel Air.

In addition to flagging its tight connection with Gulf Air, Joramco,

owned by Dubai Aerospace Enterprise, has a strong expansion story to share.

In December it will open the latest phase in a \$100 million investment programme that will significantly boost its MRO capacity, explained Currie. "We are in the final stage of fit out for Hangar 7, the largest hangar we have ever built capable of accommodating an A380 and four narrowbodies in parallel."

"This hangar is part of our five-year business plan based around expanding as the global MRO market faces capacity constraints," he noted.

"Our reputation is growing globally. At Joramco, we have access, in terms of the range of aircraft flying to Jordan for maintenance, to 50% of the world's narrowbody fleet as well as 100% of the world's widebody fleet."

"People always refer to MROs as 'regional' but it's a very outdated phrase. MROs have become global. We are taking aircraft from all over the world, and we are justified in saying we are a global MRO," said Currie.

The opening of Hangar 7 brings five parallel lines of maintenance taking Joramco's total to 22 lines of maintenance. The company



"We are in the final stage of fit out for Hangar 7, the largest hangar we have ever built capable of accommodating an A380 and four narrowbodies in parallel"

FRASER CURRIE
CEO, JORAMCO

has a strong orderbook with many carriers signing up five or 10-year MRO contracts as the lack of capacity leads them to secure MRO slots well in advance, said Currie.

He will not be drawn on the length of its order backlog, but notes "we do keep a certain amount of capacity for new customers or if existing ones have

any issues such as aircraft damage through hail or bird strikes."

Joramco's expansion plan is approved for the construction of two more hangars between now and 2030. One will be identical to Hangar 7 in size while the other is a paint hangar capable of accommodating a widebody up to the size of a Boeing 777 or two narrowbodies simultaneously.

In parallel with adding significant MRO capacity Joramco is beefing up its education and training capability with a major expansion of the Joramco Academy, said Currie.

A new 5,000 sqm state-of-the-art academy building, designed to global educational standards, was opened in October. It houses 10 modern classrooms, shops, utilities, as well as an aircraft hangar and ramp area.

"Jordan is great place to expand. We have a very successful business here and we have great access to new talented engineers and mechanics," said Currie.

"The new Part 147 Joramco Academy increases the number of students in training simultaneously to 300, a three-fold increase," said Currie. "We are doing our part to put new engineers into the system, year in, year out, and I encourage all organisations to do the same." ▲

A photograph of two women in a workshop or studio setting. They are kneeling on a wooden floor, looking at several fashion sketches or photographs laid out before them. The woman on the left is wearing a white shirt and a dark vest, while the woman on the right is wearing a yellow and orange patterned sweater. In the background, there are shelves with various items, including boxes and a purple tinsel garland. The overall atmosphere is creative and focused.

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