



MEBAA EXPANDS BIZAV HORIZONS INTO NORTH AFRICA

News / Business aviation



Despite security concerns and stagnant oil revenues, the Middle East and **North Africa** Business Aviation Association (**MEBAA**) remains optimistic about growth prospects for the region. Next year it will host the 10th MEBAA show in Dubai, where the group is headquartered, and it has just announced dates for the second edition of its new MEBAA Show Morocco, which will be staged from Sept. 11 to 13, 2017.

According to MEBAA founding chairman Ali Alnaqbi, there are now more than 1,100 business jets across the Middle East and North Africa, with around 500 of these being registered in countries outside the region. The group estimates that the business aviation market in that part of the world will be worth around \$1.2 billion annually by 2020, when traffic is expected to spike as Dubai hosts that year's World Expo.

"Today, in Dubai, we have in the region of 8,000 to 10,000 movements a year and we would like to double that by 2020," Alnaqbi told AIN. MEBAA has intervened in discussions between ground handling providers frustrated by plans to require them to share a common-use executive terminal at the new Al Maktoum International within the Dubai World Central development (now being rebranded as Dubai South). This facility is set to open around in April or May 2016, but individual FBOs are insisting that they ought to have the option of developing separate buildings.

"MEBAA is committed to supporting Dubai South [but] I don't think what's going on with shared facilities is a good idea," said Alnaqbi. "We need privacy, confidentiality. The market here needs privacy. It is growing. We have huge demand at Dubai South. Privacy is important for every FBO."

All the FBO [operators] are saying the something.”

According to MEBA (Booth N927), North Africa currently accounts for around 15 percent of the overall regional business aviation market. The group believes it can stimulate growth there, which is why it staged the first MEBA Morocco show in Casablanca in September. While conceding that the logistics of launching the event were challenging, Alnaqbi said that participation exceeded expectations, attracting 57 exhibitors and more than 2,000 visitors.

Morocco currently sees around 11,000 annual business aviation movements, with about half of these being in Marrakech. MEBA views Algeria as another promising market in North Africa. By contrast, given their ongoing security problems, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt remain stalled in terms of business aviation growth.

The past year has yielded some results from MEBA's lobbying efforts. In the United Arab Emirates, authorities adopted nine recommendations from the group to amend operating requirements that were not considered practical for the business aviation community. Restrictions on flight crew duty times were amended “significantly,” according to Alnaqbi. The group also prevailed on authorities to switch the obligation for complying with advanced passenger information from the FBOs to the aircraft operator.

Efforts to persuade authorities across the Middle East region to adopt more appropriate regulations for business aircraft operations have also been conducted in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Sudan and Morocco. For now, it has had to abandon its efforts to create a more favorable environment at Irbil in northern Iraq.

Alnaqbi said that contact with Moroccan authorities at the show in Casablanca resulted in recognition on the regulators' part that the process for securing an air operator certificate (AOC) in that country remains excessively burdensome. There are currently only four AOC holders in Morocco.

The 2016 MEBA show is expected to be the largest yet, with scope for around 20 percent more exhibit space in its new location at Dubai World Central. The event will feature a program of workshops, including one on the IS-BAO operating standards.

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