

Police Aviation News

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DUBAI HELISHOW 2006

IPAR

A large police helicopter, primarily black with green and red accents, is the central focus of the image. It is displayed on a circular platform in a large exhibition hall with a blue carpet. Several men in traditional white and beige attire are gathered around the helicopter, looking at it. The background shows other exhibition booths and people.

DUBAI HELISHOW

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DUBAI HELISHOW

the Editors view

As I missed the first Helishow in Dubai [6-9 December 2004] I had little appreciation of what to expect. Enquiries of the previous exhibitors seemed positive enough but only being there could answer many of the questions.

The underlying trend of the feedback suggested that it was a small show aimed at a relatively small high quality audience in a growing market. The organisers were already claiming 30% growth in the number of exhibitors and it was to be onward and upward. To add to the programme were workshops and a small conference.

The venue—the same as that for the highly successful and frenetic Dubai Airshow held on odd years—is superb, as it might be with a very busy airport as its backdrop. The airport itself is a superb architectural edifice even though as yet unfinished. Even though not yet complete a new far larger airport will be started in 2007! The fledgling Helishow got the location just right. I was caught out by the ‘left-over’ signage from the larger event, it did not take long to learn that BAE Systems and many of the other names gracing the doors of the permanent chalets would not be gracing the forthcoming event!

As the opening drew closer there was a hint of confusion in the air—neither the Tangent Link organised conference or the educational workshop were in place at the start of the event [although they remain posted as elements of the event on the website even as I write] and a pre-event press conference was quietly cancelled on the grounds that the local news media were the other side of town listening to someone else on a non-aviation subject. Meanwhile the Worlds aviation media at Dubai Airport were discounted, they never had a presentation of the event or heard more than muted excuses for the omissions. Not a good start.

The overall effect was perhaps made worse by an evident drop in visitor numbers compared with 2004. But size and numbers are not what this type of show is about.

All in all the core show did what it sought to do by providing a forum where product sellers could meet potential customers. There were some exhibitors who were not happy but equally there were those [mainly those that had been before] that reaped what they ex-



pected—and more. At such 'small' shows the primary object is to be there where your customer can see that you are interested enough to come to their backyard to do business. There was little direct selling, the majority of the conversation was about future contracts and the announcement of some contracts already settled after business negotiations. Among the exhibitors and visitors was a significant number of emergency services personnel making it an important venue for the typical PAN reader. In this region the emergency services have a particularly significant part to play in the growth of the helicopter industry. For the organisers to note is that there are pretenders to the throne intent of providing Arabia with potential rival events proposing to involve the emergency services far more in workshops and conferences. If these new events come to pass, the failure of those two advertised elements to appear at his years event might indeed be significant omissions that will effect the Dubai Helishow's ultimate success.

Bryn Elliott

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The Helishow attracted exhibits from all the major manufacturers, most brought aircraft, choosing to display them in the external static park or to operate them as demonstrators flying from the same area.

There were four helicopters in the cavernous exhibition hall, **MDHI** bringing an Explorer, the local **Robinson** distributor an R44, **Aerogulf** a **Bell** JetRanger and the police a Agusta-Bell 412. During the bi-annual air show the large halls of the Dubai Expo site burst at the seams, this provides plenty of growth room for the future but does leave the smaller event 'rattling around' the hall it currently uses.

Primarily because they chose to place their only aircraft in the hall MDHI took star place in their location and attracted the majority of the visitors. The MD902 Explorer displayed was one of the former LUH demonstrator airframes, N902LH intended for delivery to a customer after the show. Although it retained its US registration for the show the machine, c/n 0041, will be delivered to JARA in Jordan. 41 is already ten years old but like the rest of the type it now sports the new extended Notar tail that MDHI expect to bring about the regeneration of the type in the perception of the industry.



The installation of the tailboom thruster extension improves the tail authority at low speed. It also enables operations with a 250lb increase in MAUW of 6500lbs.

Dubai was the first public display of the marriage between MDHI and their UK based distributors in the region **Action Aviation** of Luton.

Action Aviation were recently appointed as a distributor for MD helicopters for regions including the Arab Gulf and Scandinavia. The exclusive distribution contract is for eight years. Countries covered include the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland. Helicopters marketed will include the MD Explorer, the MD 600N, MD 520N, MD 530F and the MD 500E.

Action Aviation, better known for being the distributors of the Sino Swearingen SJ30 business jet have a sub-office in Dubai but they do not have the distributorship of the MD line in the UK.



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UK based ground support supplier **Powervamp** started the show on a roll when they sold one of their battery packs to MDHI even before the show opened. The manufacturers elderly existing power-pack failed just before the event allowing Powervamp to step in with the first of a number of sales. The unit took pride of place in front of the Explorer throughout the event, in view of the general buzz on the MD stand that was perhaps as useful a product placement as many might expect!

The Weston-super-Mare based company was primarily promoting its power supplies but it also had on display remote site lighting and the latest version of the air-portable Portapump. A small lightweight and compact portable fuelling/defuelling unit with full size aviation filter and high delivery pump designed to be carried in light turbine helicopters the Portapump can be operated from any 24v~28v DC power source. Already proven in field conditions it was developed for those needing to rapidly fuel/defuel aircraft, vehicles or marine vessels using either the aircraft, vehicle or vessel's own 24-28 volt DC power, 24 volt GPU or a 110/220Ac supply. Suitable for pumping Jet A1, diesel or other fluids with a petrol version available.

Regular readers will recall that Powervamp purchased the successful pump from its original developers Aeromega some years ago and have continued to develop it in its role as a high quality tool for refuelling aircraft at remote locations. One of the main thrusts of past work has been to enable the unit to safely pump petrol [gas]. At Dubai they displayed the latest version which seeks to reduce its overall weight by dispensing with the full outer casing and replacing it with a skeletal structure. Even as the Dubai Helishow was taking place examples of the unit were in service supporting the 15th Asian Games in Doha.



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Several high-value deals signed during the Helishow underlined the importance and overall buoyancy of the Middle East helicopter market. Some major manufacturers have said that orders are coming in so fast they are having trouble satisfying them.

An event attracting Royalty, offshore oil and gas operators and officials from civil and military arms of Gulf governments had profile if not overall visitor numbers.

With the World's economy based on oil vendors reported strong sales, helped by surging government budgets fuelled from high oil proceeds, that is what makes the Dubai event more important than its size. Across the board operators are replacing older aircraft for next-generation models that provide more comfort and power in addition to sophisticated avionics systems.

One of the major announcements was that the police in the UAE are to take delivery of AW139 helicopters to replace their Bell's. Although regularly denied the sales of the AW139 to the Royal Oman Police has been an open secret for a couple of years. Now we know that both the ROP and UAE will start seeing deliveries towards the end of 2007 although the announcement on Abu-Dhabi is couched in terms that suggest that the contract has yet to be finalised.


In its class the 139 is becoming the airframe of choice, with the old Bell helicopters now being replaced by what was once branded an Agusta-Bell it seems that Bell may have left the programme a mite early.

Renzo Lunardi, senior vice president of **AgustaWestland**, has said that sales are up 15% in the Middle East this year. At the show the company signed a partnership with Abu Dhabi Aviation so creating the first spare parts centre in the region for the company's AW139 and A109 helicopters.

The agreement provides for the two to build a completion centre where helicopters will be assembled and this may also lead to the building of a maintenance and repair depot in the future.

Models held sway on the now familiar bright red internal display whereas in the static area outside the full range of AgustaWestland hardware could be seen. Several examples of locally operated Agusta 109 and 139 were testimony to the success the company has been enjoying in the region. Unfortunately no example of the Falcon Aviation Services SAR contract AW139 operated on behalf of the UAE armed forces was evident.






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They may be losing out on the hardware, but Bell Helicopter signed a training deal with **Emirates-CAE**, a flight training joint venture between Emirates Group and Canadian firm CAE. The agreement authorises the flight simulation school to train pilots to fly Bell helicopters.

Bell were well represented in the static park albeit by 'classic' models rather than anything outstanding.

The local Dubai Interior Ministry Department of Civil Defence [effectively the fire department] has taken delivery of a number of ex-military Bell helicopters for use in the aerial fire-fighting role. In the static were two Bell twin's DU-323 and DU-324. The latter remains in its original military guise complete with a dull camouflage colour scheme but DU-323 is already repainted a bright yellow and will shortly be undergoing further conversion into new role. The fleet are being equipped with a water cannon.

The **Sikorsky** stand hosted models and the associated company **Schweizer**. There were fixed wing aircraft being marketed, there is a proposal to use the **Reims F406** twin in the covert surveillance role—an area well known to the type.





Like the AgustaWestland display **Eurocopter's** inside exhibit was muted, but they too were well represented outside in the static park by a Navy Puma and examples of the EC130B4.



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Law enforcement aviation was well represented in the hall, although all was not exactly as might be expected. UK based **Police Aviation Services** were present primarily to meet their actual and potential regional customers [they have support contracts with the Kuwait police] and likewise Northampton based **Sloane Helicopters** were there to promote a range of support services removed from their UK role as AgustaWestland and Robinson agents.

The title of the Sharjah based **Business Supplies Company** hardly inspired but this Russian helicopter agent was attracting a good audience for their presentations on their 'light multipurpose rotorplane' - a light autogyro aimed - amongst other markets - at the security and surveillance market. Nothing new in that, it seems everyone has placed the Homeland Security feather in their cap since 9-11.

True law enforcement content at the Helishow was dependent upon the local Dubai and Abu Dhabi police. Abu Dhabi manned a double stand where Dubai manned their Agusta-Bell 412 in the exhibition hall.

Currently UAE police air units are primarily tasked with a HEMS role and the current aircraft fleet mix of six 412s, three BK117s and three BO105s reflects this. There are rumours that they wish to move towards a operating model based on European practice but this might well have to await the arrival of new equipment next year.

Among the audience there were UAE officers seeking out possible equipment options for the future - along with representatives of the Royal Oman Police and of course Dubai Civil Defence, a fair sprinkling of the emergency services.



Although equipped with a FLIR turret, the primary HEMS and rescue roles undertaken by UAE crews is belied by the prominence of medical and winch equipment on the Agusta-Bell helicopters.



A THIN TIME

Yes open for business! HAI Heli-Expo was never like this was it?

Staff on the Robinson stand at least have each other to talk to whereas the sole representative on the MRC booth can but wait alone for the elusive business contacts to pass through.



DIVERSION

Although clearly not core market business, some interest was shown in the section of the hall set aside selling carpets ...




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