

Abu Dhabi
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ABU DHABI AVIATION

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Abu Dhabi Aviation (ADA) is the most effective as well as the largest operator in the region with MOR services to match

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Abu Dhabi Aviation (ADA) was formed in 1976 as a joint venture between the emirate of Abu Dhabi and an overseas company, its mission to provide the Arabian Gulf offshore oil industry with air support services. Its journey from those tentative beginnings, operating just two aircraft, to become the largest commercial helicopter operator in the Middle East is a remarkable success story. It currently operates more than 100 of its own and its client’s helicopters as well as three fixed wing aircraft, offering its experience and its services globally.

With assets of nearly \$1 billion, ADA operates mainly Bell and AgustaWestland helicopters and Bombardier Dash 8 series turboprop transport aircraft but it also offers these aircraft on lease to clients around the world – often the most cost-effective solution for them.

It is also one of the region’s largest repair, maintenance and overhaul companies, servicing both helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, whether for its own fleet or for outside clients. Many of the world’s largest petroleum companies turn to ADA for the heavy maintenance and modification of their aircraft. “There is no facility in the Middle East – or indeed the Far East – which will provide the services we are planning to deliver,” says chairman Nader Ahmed Mohammed Al Hammadi. “Our current capabilities provide services to our clients on a global basis with

approximately 40 percent of ADA’s business coming from outside the UAE.”

The facility is located at Abu Dhabi International Airport. The maintenance complex consists of two hangars for fixed and rotary wing aircraft – all under one roof. Total hangar floor space is 5,130 square metres. The hangars are linked by the engineering management and administration block and associated support workshops. Total workshop floor space is 3,769 square metres. More than 220 people are employed in the engineering Department, including over 140 qualified and experienced aircraft maintenance engineers & workshop technicians.


Abu Dhabi Aviation was awarded a special plaque by Bell Helicopter after completing 700,000 helicopter flight hours – the figure is now approaching a million hours. Due to the high intensity of offshore oil

support work, around 200,000 landings and take-offs are required annually, while the company transfers around 26,000 passengers and 162,000 kilograms of freight to and from offshore facilities each month. Sustaining these impressive rates has required a high degree of dedication, commitment and professionalism on the part of the pilots, engineers and support staff.

Following many years of successful collaboration with AgustaWestland ADA created a helicopter maintenance joint venture with this major supplier in 2011. The new company, named AgustaWestland Aviation Services, will carry out a range of services and

100,000





**Hours of operation
 in Bell helicopters**



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activities for the sale of helicopter spare parts and accessories, helicopter/component repair and overhaul, customisation, modification and upgrading. According to the evolution of future market requirements, the joint venture's scope of activities could be further expanded to encompass special configuration development, component production and even helicopter assembly.

Customers are now offered a wide range of services in Abu Dhabi that have historically been available only from the manufacturer in Italy or the United States. "We aim to be a global aviation company beyond its current international business scope, and the new joint venture is a step in the right direction.

The joint venture will be of mutual benefit for both partners to further expand their range of services, capabilities and presence. The demand for helicopter maintenance across the Middle East is growing and providing this service right at the doorstep of our clients is a benefit that will see huge returns in terms of overall industry growth," said Al Hammadi.

While most of the company's work is still for oil and gas industry clients, it has diversified as demand for helicopter intervention has grown. These days it routinely conducts agricultural, geological and search and rescue operations. It leases aircraft and helicopters to the fire fighting services in Europe and Australia at

3,769 M²
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Area of maintenance facility

the height of their fire fighting seasons. It has variously provides seismic support in Yemen, assisted the telecommunications network in Oman, carried out crop spraying in the UAE, disaster relief in Pakistan and has been happy to provide health evacuation and medical services to the huge crowds that gather in Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca and Medina during the busy Ramadhan and Haj seasons. It is of course well versed in the techniques of medical evacuation, a vital contribution to the health and safety support of offshore oil rigs.

In 1984 ADA pioneered the technique of long line vertical referencing in the Middle East. Vertical reference flying is flying while looking downward rather than horizontally using the natural horizon. It's an extremely unnatural way to fly a helicopter but it can be learnt, and is very useful in the kind of seismic surveys used when looking for oil or other resources. The work is performed by helicopters specially configured to utilise under-slung load techniques that incorporate a long-line of up to 200 feet, enabling the helicopter to remain clear of all obstructions.

As part of this service ADA has completed a number of contracts in the rugged mountains of Oman and Yemen, using a 40 metre long line. Similar long-line vertical



referencing techniques are also being applied to numerous construction projects in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen. Some very successful applications have included the erection of electricity pylons as part of government schemes to bring electricity to remote areas, and in the construction of microwave towers for data and voice transmission by the telecommunications sector.

Another key service provided by ADA is

search and rescue support for the Armed Forces of the United Arab Emirates. This is operated out of four strategic bases located within the Emirate, with a dedicated fleet of seven state-of-the-art AgustaWestland AW139

helicopters fully equipped for search and rescue. Each carries a complement of two pilots, a winch operator and a specialist rescue paramedic. The SAR helicopters are in readiness to be called out 24 hours a day and seven days of the week. They operate over both land and sea, and can also be called out to provide assistance to the general public, working in coordination with civilian rotary wing operations. They also undertake inter-hospital patient transfers.

200,000

Annual movements in support of O&G clients

ADA's helicopters can also be configured to perform a number of other specialised tasks. From 1996, for example, the company has been under contract to Catalonia to undertake fire-fighting services as and

when required. Spain, with its dry climate and wooded terrain, is very vulnerable to wildfire outbursts particularly during the hot summer months. 2009, for example, was a particularly bad year, and fires during the dry season were severe enough to achieve international news coverage. The helicopters used for this vital task are Bell 212 and 412s fitted with highly effective Isolair ventral tank and snorkel systems for scooping up and delivering water to quench the flames. These

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are regularly seen in action in Catalonia.

The company’s Bell 212, 412 and 206 helicopters can also be fitted with specialised camera equipment, and these are then contracted to provide coverage for live photo missions. Among the missions the company has fulfilled are contracts to provide live local

TV coverage of dhow races at one end of the spectrum, through to taking the dramatic ‘tanker war’ footage that was shown on the major news networks worldwide during the Iran-Iraq war. On a less perilous note, the company has diversified into a range of services that promote health and productivity. A number

of the Bell 206 helicopters, for example, can be configured to carry spray equipment capable of applying both insecticides and pesticides. In this role the company regularly carries out extensive spraying programmes in both the UAE and Oman.

February 2013 saw Abu Dhabi host IDEX, arguably the most strategically important tri-service defence exhibition in the world. ADA was present, with a large pavilion, in common with its partner Finnmeccanica, owner of AgustaWestland. However ADA’s presence was as much about showing the company’s commitment to the government and its requirements. “We seek to harness

our participation in IDEX to show support for police throughout the UAE and other countries, who are either participating or observing the activities of the expo, especially in the field of search and rescue operations,” said Al Hammadi. “The message we are bringing to IDEX is that our fleet and crews stand ready 24 hours a day, for search, rescue, support and logistic operations, at sea and on land.” **BE**

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