MEBAA EMBRACES NORTH AFRICA WITH MOROCCO SHOW

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As the two-day MEBAA Show Morocco opened in Casablanca yesterday, event organizer Middle East and North Africa Business Aviation Association (MEBAA) billed the northwest African country as “the new destination for business aviation.”

MEBAA chairman Ali Alnaqbi opened the show alongside H.E. Mohamed Najib Boulif, minister delegate to the Moroccan Minister of Equipment, Transport and Logistics, H.E. Aziz Rebbah. MEBAA Show Morocco is held under the patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, who has ruled since 1999.

Alnaqbi immediately stated his intention that the show would run again next year. But MEBAA is also in Morocco to mark its territory, as the more recently founded African Business Aviation Association (AfBAA) also stakes its claim in the region. AfBAA will next meet in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on September 24 and 25.

Casablanca is a far bigger place than it was in the 1930s, a sprawling metropolis and the largest financial center in northwest Africa. It also has a large port and a center for petrochemical industry at Mohammedia, on the way to Rabat to the north. This is one reason why, during the first day of the show, the airport/air navigation authority (ONDA) and Moroccan DGCA announced that they are hoping that Ben Slimane Airport, near Mohammedia, could become the region’s first dedicated business aviation hub airport. But the authorities also hope to establish more substantial FBOs at the six top airports in Morocco, chiefly Casablanca and Marrakech, and have issued an invitation to tender as the first step.

The show has only six aircraft present on the static display: a Dassault Falcon 7X, Cessna Caravan, DiamondDA42, Bombardier Global 6000, Beechcraft Hawker 900XP and a Gulfstream G550. These are parked in front of a line of 30 or so exhibitor tents on the huge apron at Casablanca Mohammed V International Airport, some 20 miles from Casa Port, the center of the city. But the feeling was of new beginnings and something that could prosper in the same way Aero Expo has at Al Bateen, Abu Dhabi, after a very low-key start a few years ago.

“With 57 exhibitors on site, the show, organized by F&E Aerospace on behalf of MEBAA, features offerings from industry heavyweights Bombardier and Gulfstream, regional companies like AfricAir, plus a static display of the latest business aircraft,” said MEBAA.

The show continues through today, when MEBAA is expecting the total number of visitors to reach around 2,000.

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