

Kuwait Aviation Show 2018



From 17 to 20 January 2018, Kuwait hosted the *Kuwait Aviation Show* (KAS) held at Kuwait International Airport, marking the first step of an ambitious plan to become a major player in the aviation industry in the Middle East. This plan includes becoming the largest cargo-handling area in the region.

The event, also marketed as “Your aerospace gateway to the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council),” was held in an aircraft hangar and adjacent static aircraft display area. This first edition appeared to have attracted only a limited number of participants, judging by the layout of the exhibition area and the empty booths.

On 17 January, the show was opened by Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Homoud Al-Sabah, the President of Civil Aviation in Kuwait. Following the opening speeches, the Kuwait Air Force (KAF) performed a fly by with three AH-64Ds from Ali al-Salem Air Base followed by a flypast of a Kuwait Airways Boeing 777 flanked by four F/A-18s. After a performance of the Turkish Air Force F-16 (*Solo Türk*), the flying display of

the opening day was closed by a performance of the Saudi Hawks. Of the four days overall, two days were trade days while the last days were open to the public. With only the Saudi Hawks performing on all days, the flying display was very limited and missed a large KAF and civil participation.

Besides adding to the somewhat limited flying displays, the Kuwait Air Force presented several of its assets in the static display. Since assets of the KAF are hardly ever seen outside the country, the Kuwait Aviation Show presented a rare opportunity to view the Kuwait Air Force.

Training

Representing the training fleet of the KAF, both a Tucano T52 as well as a Hawk Mk64 were on display, while helicopter training was represented by a Gazelle.

Initial training for KAF pilots is being done abroad, in France. *Défense Conseil International* (DCI) offers training at its International Centre for Academic and Aeronautical Training (CIFAA) in Salon de Provence, in partnership with Aix-Marseille University and the French Air Force Academy in Salon de Provence. The syllabus

is identical to that of the French Air Force and covers a period of two years, using civil registered Cirrus SR-20 & SR-22 aircraft.

Next steps for future helicopter pilots are also in France, as DCI-H (or International Helicopter Training Centre), the helicopter school of DCI, also provides the basic helicopter training at Dax-Seyresse and Le Luc/Le Cannet using civil registered EC120Bs. This course includes a two-week high-altitude training in the Pyrenees simulating operations in hot weather conditions. After finishing basic helicopter training, a type-conversion is done in France on ALAT Gazelles before returning to Kuwait for further training.

After finishing the DCI-course at Salon de Provence, fixed wing pilots return to Kuwait for their follow-up training. The KAF uses the Tucano T52 for training with 19 Training Squadron, based at Ali al Salem air base. Sixteen aircraft were delivered in the mid-nineties, of which twelve remain active. Fighter pilots transfer to 12 Training Squadron, flying nine Hawk Mk64s, before eventually transferring to the 61 Fighter & Attack squadron equipped with the F/A-18C/D. Besides that, Kuwait