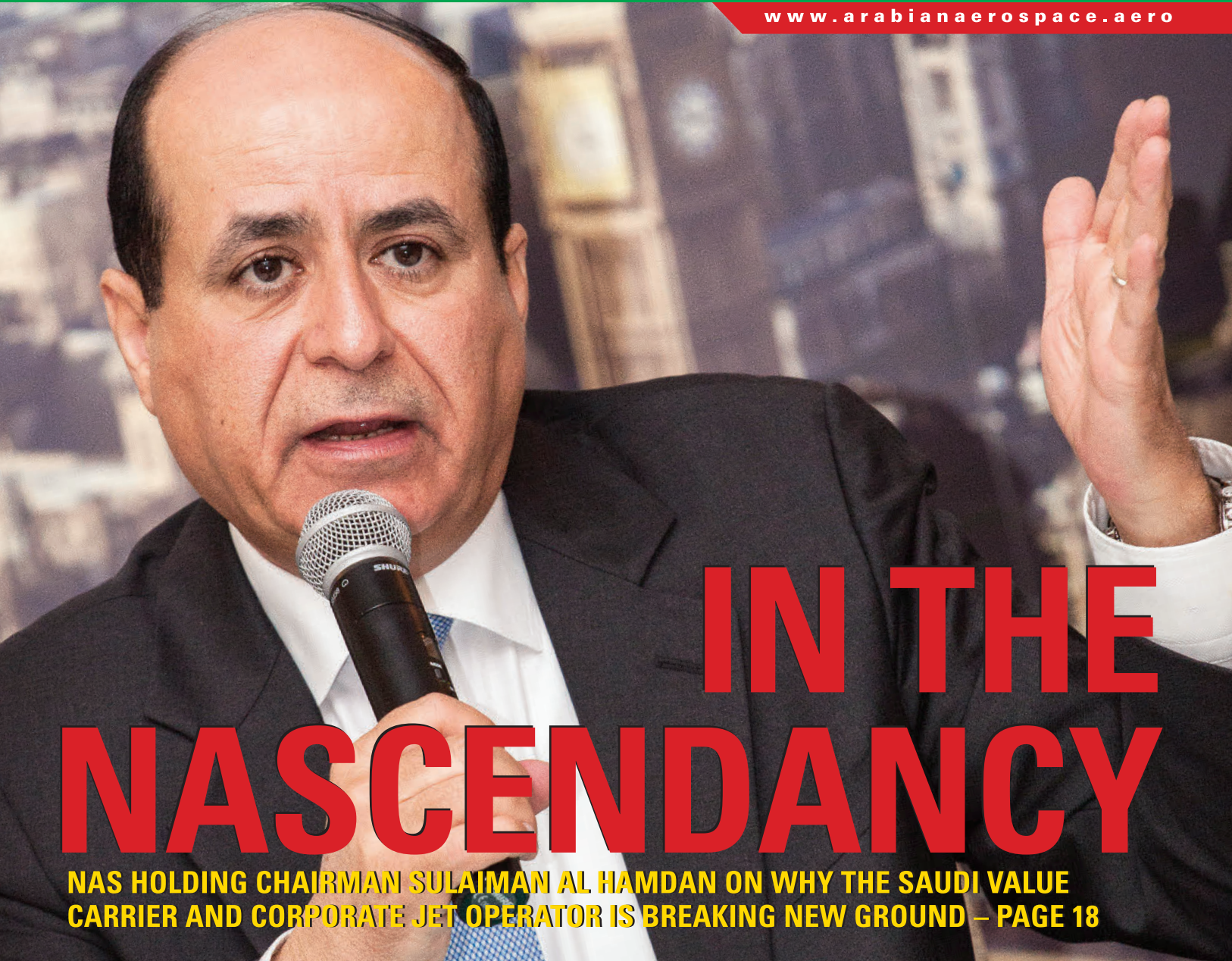




ARABIAN AEROSPACE

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IN THE NASCENDANCY

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More than 400 airline and manufacturers' delegates attended the latest IATP conference in Hamburg.

Sharing: the secret

It's every airline's nightmare: an aircraft goes unserviceable at an airport down-route, where the carrier does not have onsite engineering support.

A spare part or urgent maintenance is required to get it back in the air. But, with every airline today having an obsession with its bottom line, it is impossible for it to station engineers and a full inventory of spares at every point on its route network.

So, how does it avoid lengthy delays, irate passengers and the cost of urgently flying out spares or personnel?

The answer is an organisation that began operations more than 60 years ago but which, even today, is hardly known outside the airline industry. Yet it saves its members millions of dollars and innumerable hours of delay every year.

Technical assistance

The International Airlines Technical Pool (IATP) came into existence in 1948, when a small number of European carriers committed to providing each other with reciprocal technical assistance, without financial settlement, if one of their aircraft 'went tech'.

Today, with 102 full airline members and 32 associate members, the IATP footprint can be found all over the world. It includes eight African and 15 Middle Eastern airlines (there is some overlap with north African members in those totals) that will come to the aid of carriers that would usually be regarded as competitors.

Alan Dron travels to Hamburg to find out why 'going tech' is not the problem it used to be.

Remarkably, it remains a not-for-profit organisation, which agrees cost-sharing formulae with its members for the services it organises.

The IATP system is very simple: if a member's aircraft needs a spare part, it can borrow that component from a fellow-IATP member for 14 days, with a further seven-day period to return it.

There are formulae by which any costs are calculated and eventually billed to the airline. However, any costs to member airlines are considerably less than they would incur if they had to buy or transport the spares to a stranded aircraft.

In the summer 2013 season, for example, IATP members shared around \$190 million in spare parts and provided line maintenance pooling at more than 400 locations.

One major participant in IATP is EgyptAir. A member since 1962, it operates maintenance services for foreign airlines within Cairo and can also call on fellow IATP members abroad when required.

This can be particularly important in areas of Africa, where MRO facilities are at a premium in several regions.

"With IATP, if we're in the middle of nowhere, there's always a way to find someone," explained Tarek Ghoneim, EgyptAir Maintenance & Engineering's marketing and maintenance contract director. IATP, he says, has played a major role with EgyptAir Maintenance and will continue to do so into the future.

Third-party maintenance revenues became increasingly important during the Arab Spring and Egyptian Second Revolution, when the political upheavals led to sharp downturns in inbound passenger traffic.

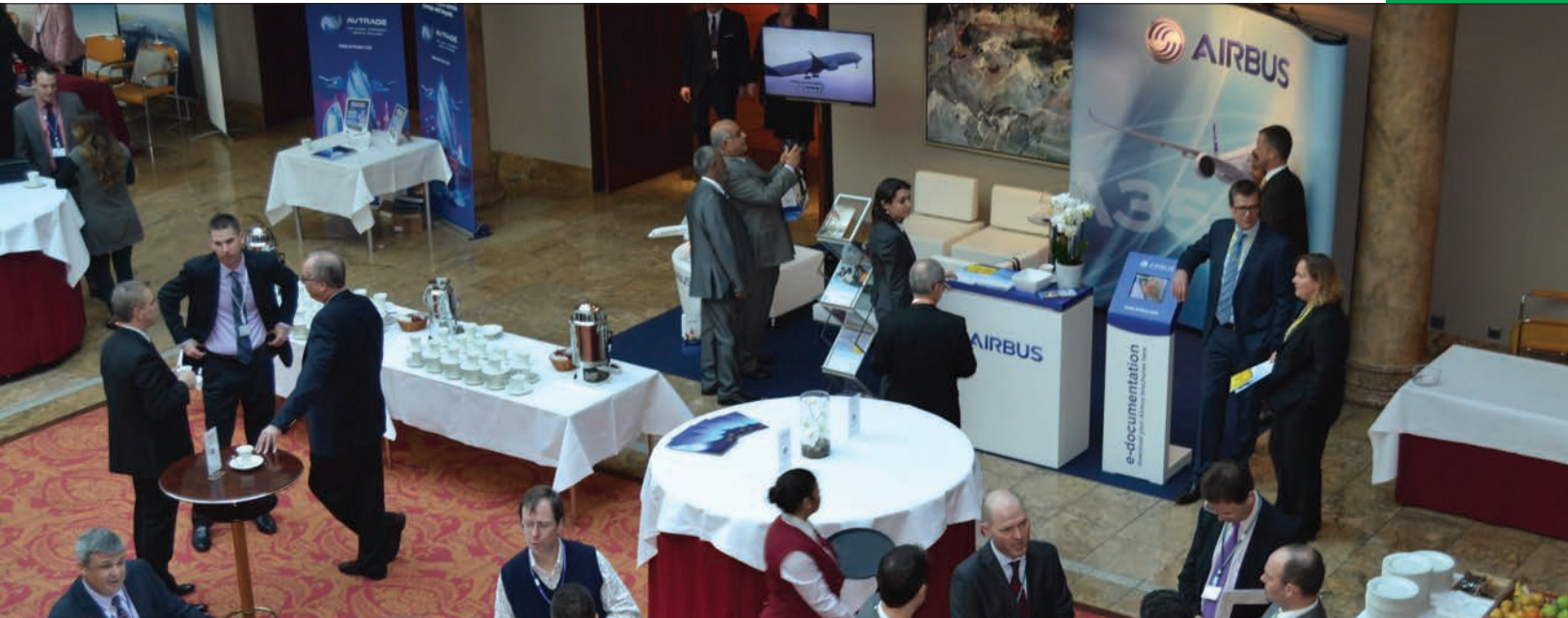
"We're always looking for more members," said Essam Hanafy, vice-president of IATP's board of directors, whose 'day job' is as the chairman's advisor for materials at EgyptAir Maintenance & Engineering. Increasing the number of airlines means upping the resources available to members, he added.

Urgent calls

One of the most urgent calls for assistance comes when an aircraft suffers an undercarriage collapse or skids off a runway, perhaps sinking into soft ground. Airports need to have the aircraft removed as quickly as possible in order to restore operations.

Aircraft recovery kits – huge airbags that are wedged under the stricken aircraft's wings or fuselage then inflated, plus recovery jacks and slings – typically cost \$1 million per set and are, thus, not held by every airline.

IATP members hold 12 of these recovery kits



Outside the main conference and negotiating sessions, delegates networked with colleagues and suppliers' representatives.

at strategic locations around the world that can be flown quickly to the scene of an accident. The fee for providing this to fellow-IATP members is a modest \$500 daily (which pays for a supervising engineer to oversee the use of the kit) for up to seven days.

A non-IATP member airline can still call on the organisation's assistance in these circumstances, but will have to pay an up-front charge of \$120,000, plus the cost of the engineer and a daily charge of \$6,000.

Having access to this type of recovery kit is vital. Airports need runways or taxiways to be cleared as quickly as possible and many now insist that airlines have a plan in place to get access to recovery equipment before they are allowed to start services.

IATP's activities cover four main areas: spare parts pooling, line maintenance pooling, equipment pooling and aircraft recovery. Currently, the first two categories make up most of these activities, but IATP hopes to expand into training and base maintenance.

Within IATP there are 10 parts, maintenance or equipment pools, either covering a particular model of aircraft or types of ground equipment. There is also the aircraft recovery pool, mentioned above.

Currently, most types of jet airliners are covered. Significantly, IATP has a new target of supporting regional aircraft and talks are under way to bring Embraer and Bombardier aircraft within its responsibilities. This is likely to be particularly significant in Africa.

Face-to-face with the solution

IATP members hold two conferences each year to conduct business before the start of airlines' summer and winter seasons. This provides a forum for the airlines' technical decision-makers to identify the most cost-effective support solutions for their organisation.

Possibly the most important aspect, however, is networking between the representatives of the carriers that attend.

Creating and maintaining personal links between airlines' maintenance departments provides the essential contacts that enable urgent repairs to be carried out swiftly when an airliner goes unserviceable at a distant location.

At the most recent conference in Hamburg in March, airline representatives spoke of the benefits that IATP membership brings their respective companies. Several delegates commented that, because of IATP, the airline maintenance community felt like a global family. Here's what some of them had to say:

■ **South African Airways:** Danny Boulanger, project co-ordinator of IATP's board of directors, whose 'day job' is contract coordinator line stations. "It's through this forum that we know each other. For example, a member airline had a 747 in Nairobi with leaking landing gear seals. Through our contacts, the managing director of a member airline contacted me, asking if we could assist. We had people on standby within 30 minutes and on a flight to Nairobi within a few hours. If it hadn't been for these contacts, it would have taken a lot longer to fix the problem."

■ **Libyan Airlines:** Sadegh Lasebai, technical advisor. "These meetings give an opportunity for Libyan Airlines to choose the right companies that can handle our aircraft throughout our network. We consult people at these meetings about technical affairs, especially spares and maintenance."

■ **Ethiopian Airlines:** Zeweter Abebe, supervisor AOG desk. "There's no doubt about it, it develops relationships between individuals that really speed up responses on AOG days."

■ **Emirates Airline:** Imran Umar, manager, component management. "We're in the 'Top 10' in terms of IATP activity.

"How does it help? It optimises our costs, because we don't have to position our spares at all our stations. We look at the IATP website and that tells us where the parts are."

■ **Royal Jordanian:** Motasem Mohammad Saleh Alharbi, team leader, material support & logistics. "We use it for spare parts pooling and technical support to other carriers.

"We gain money from other carriers that are flying into Amman. For example, if Saudia asks us to keep a nose or main landing gear as a spare, they pay us on a monthly basis to store it safely for them."

■ **Saudia:** Tarik Al Johani, material specialist. "When you're pooling in stations you're saving a lot of money and a lot of space.

"When you come to a conference you see people face-to-face and if you have a problem, you can solve it directly. The problem with the younger generation is that they do everything by e-mail. If you send an e-mail, you don't know who it's going to; if you've met somebody here, you can solve a problem by phoning him."

■ **Emirates Airline,** Augustus Gunasekera, planning manager for out-station support. "Last year we avoided five AOG situations by going through the pooling system. One of the benefits of the conferences is that we get the opportunity to talk face-to-face and solve issues."