
Dubai: A Meeting Point for the Aviation Business

The Emirates have become a crossroads for the trade in aircraft spare parts - including for European companies operating in civil aviation.

The center of gravity of the trade in aircraft spare parts for civil aircraft is shifting. While traditional hubs in Europe and North America retain their importance, Dubai has gradually established itself as one of the key meeting points for the aviation business in the Middle East. Every year, MRO service providers, aircraft parts distributors, and airlines from around the world gather here. The upcoming MRO Middle East 2026 trade fair, taking place on February 4-5 at the Dubai World Trade Centre, is expected by organizers to be the largest in the event's history.

A strategic crossroads not only for the Middle East

Dubai's geographic location places it within an eight-hour flight of two-thirds of the world's population. This simple fact has major implications for the aviation aftermarket. Airlines operating in the Middle East, Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia are increasingly sourcing aircraft spare parts and MRO services within this region.

The numbers speak for themselves. According to the Boeing Commercial Market Outlook, the fleet of civil aircraft in the Middle East will more than double by 2040. This growth is creating unprecedented demand for spare parts, maintenance services, and operational technical support.

For European aviation companies, Dubai represents a significant opportunity to connect with regional carriers. Airlines in the region predominantly operate Airbus A320 Family aircraft, Boeing 737 NG, 777, and 787 series aircraft, as well as various regional turboprops—naturally generating demand for spare parts and technical support that European distributors have built up over decades. Alena Šimečková, Managing Director of the Czech company APRAM

Aerospace, has been observing this development firsthand through her repeated participation at MRO Middle East.

“Ten years ago, European spare parts suppliers viewed the Middle East as an emerging market, something for the future. Today, it is an important part of our international activities,” says Šimečková. “The sophistication of local customers has increased dramatically. They demand quality, certified spare parts, and short delivery times just like any major European carrier.”

APRAM Aerospace, an ISO 9001- and ASA-100-certified company based in the Czech Republic, is gradually expanding its presence in the Gulf region, with a focus on supporting narrow-body fleets that form the backbone of regional air transport.

The AOG factor

One area where Dubai’s strategic location proves particularly valuable is Aircraft-on-Ground (AOG) situations, where every hour of unplanned downtime costs airlines tens of thousands of dollars. The city’s top-tier logistics infrastructure, concentrated around Dubai International Airport and Al Maktoum International Airport, enables rapid delivery of spare parts across a vast geographic area.

“When an aircraft is grounded in Muscat or Nairobi, Dubai is often the fastest source for critical parts,” explains Šimečková. “We maintain relationships with logistics partners specifically for these AOG situations. The combination of available inventory and transport speed is hard to beat in the region.”

AOG capability has become a key differentiator for distributors serving Middle Eastern carriers. Expectations are no longer limited to competitive pricing, but include the ability to deliver anywhere in the region within hours, not days.

The rapid growth of Middle Eastern aviation is accompanied by an equally rapid maturation of quality expectations. Regional carriers and MRO centers now require complete documentation, including EASA or FAA certificates, as well as full traceability of aircraft parts.

“I occasionally encounter the misconception that emerging markets accept lower service quality. My experience is the opposite,” Šimečková notes. “Airlines here are building their reputations. They cannot afford quality issues with spare parts deliveries. They carefully verify documentation, check received certificates, and conduct supplier audits. Our ISO 9001 and ASA-100 certifications are not just a nice bonus—they are an absolute requirement in spare parts supply.”

This emphasis on quality has created a natural market filter that favors established suppliers with robust quality management systems over opportunistic traders.

Trade fairs cannot be replaced by emails—or even AI

MRO Middle East has grown into one of the most important events on the aviation calendar, ranking just behind MRO Americas and MRO Europe in terms of exhibitors and visitors. For many companies, the annual Dubai exhibition is where a significant portion of their yearly business is initiated.

“We approach MRO Middle East as a platform for meeting partners from the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia,” says Šimečková. “The concentration of decision-makers in one place over two days is incredibly efficient. Relationships that would take months to build remotely can begin with a handshake at the exhibition. Face-to-face contact is more important to many customers than 100 exchanged emails. Even emerging AI cannot replace that. That’s why Dubai is our first stop this year on a series of meetings with aircraft spare parts manufacturers, business partners, and airlines.”

This year’s edition is expected to welcome more than 300 exhibitors and over 9,000 visitors, reflecting the continued growth of the regional aviation sector despite global economic uncertainties.

The fundamentals driving Dubai’s growth as an aviation hub show no signs of weakening. Population growth, rising middle-class demand for travel, and the ongoing expansion of Gulf airlines all point to sustainable growth in the

regional aftermarket.

For European distributors, the message is clear: the Middle Eastern market is now fully developed and demands high-quality service, relationship building, and often a *direct presence at regional events*.

“Companies that recognized this development early are now reaping the rewards,” Šimečková concludes. “Those that still see the region as a marginal add-on to their European core are finding that they are missing attractive opportunities. The Middle Eastern market has matured significantly, and events like MRO Middle East reflect this evolution.”