

# Trustco Namibia International Airshow 2015



By Charlie Hugo

**It has been twenty years since the Namibians had a local airshow to enjoy. About a year ago, Reinhardt Gärtner and other parties within the Aircraft Owners and Pilots' Association Namibia started planning an event to be held in Windhoek, Namibia. With the support of many organisations, individuals, not least of all Trustco Namibia, the Namibian Government as well as multiple government departments, the Namibian DCA and Hosea Kutako International Airport management an International airshow was born.**

## Airshow day

One must bear in mind that Hosea Kutako International Airport is located around 45 kilometres from the city of Windhoek. This did not deter the Namibians who turned out in the thousands to enjoy an aviation display that many have not seen in their lives. In the end, in excess of 14500 airshow enthusiasts spent a late winter's day (winter is relative in this part of the world, at least during the day) being entertained by a variety of displays.

An extremely comprehensive static display on general aviation was dominated by Air Namibia's flagship Airbus A330 with

its baby brother an Airbus A320 from SAA, brought in for the airshow to perform a display. The static display was extremely varied with many different aircraft and flight related businesses. I found a gem in a TravelAir 1000 parked next to a vintage Cessna 170. The enthusiasts thronged around viewing the displays and long queues formed to visit the Air Namibia Airbus 330 walk through.

As part of the charter of the airshow, "To bring aviation closer to the people of Namibia and the people of Namibia closer to Aviation" around 1000 previously disadvantaged school children were brought to the airshow to expose them to the aviation industry. Some of these children were brought by



*Bell Huey*

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*Chengdu F-7 formation*



special train laid on by TransNamibia or by bus from outlying areas. Trustco supplied these pupils with goodie bags and refreshments were laid on for them to enjoy. For many this would be their first sight of an aircraft. Mark Hill with his AN-2 Little Annie spent Friday and Saturday providing many of these children with their first experience of flying.

Starting at 09h00 a number of warm up displays were performed. Local lad, Jacques Jacobs in his Nanchang CJ-6 opened proceedings whilst the Desert Air Cessna Grand Caravan took to the skies to gain sufficient altitude for the skydivers. This was followed by the Eqstra Flying Lions' Harvard display and then Nigel Hopkins in his MX-2 wowed the crowd with his high energy display. Alan Fergus in his Czech L-39 Albatros was the first of the jet displays of the day. Deon Wentzel in the Cirrus SR-22T concluded the warm up session. Then things hotted up!

The president of Namibia, Mr. Hage Geingob and his wife arrived in an immaculate AgustaWestland AB-139 helicopter to formally open the airshow. Once the opening addresses were concluded, enter from show right came the Namibian Police Airwing's helicopters in a simulated crime scenario. Whilst an

Airbus Helicopter H125 (previously known as the Eurocopter AS350 Squirrel) circled high in a command and control role, two additional helicopters, an Airbus Helicopters' H145 (Eurocopter EC-145) with support from a second Squirrel brought in the special forces to apprehend the bad guys.

Then it was the turn of the heavy metal. Two Namibian Air Force Chengdu F-7 Airguards (Chinese licence-built variant of the Mig-21 F) took to the skies roaring out the sound of freedom from their afterburners. What a pleasure it was to be able to see these rarely seen aircraft tearing up the skies. Menno Parsons in his P51D Mustang Sally followed this and then an unusual display with Desert Air returning to the skies with a three-ship formation of Aero Commanders. The Namibian Air Force returned with another two ship display performed by Hongdu K-8 trainers.

The Goodyear Eagles then took to the sky in their Pitts Specials to execute their high energy aerobatic display before Nigel Hopkins, at the controls of the SAA Airbus A320 displayed the agility of this airliner. Incredibly, to top this all off, the organisers managed to gain two major drawcards from

*Hongdu K-8 formation*



*Hawker Siddeley Buccaneer*



Thunder City in Cape Town which sent two of its jets in the form of a Blackburn Buccaneer and Hawker Hunter. It has been at least twenty five years since a Buccaneer flew over Namibia and this huge, powerful jet was well received. One question though; why is it that we South Africans have to go to Namibia to see jets that are based in South Africa?

In the late afternoon two Bell products, a modern Bell 222 in formation with a rare TH1L (Huey) performed a couple of flypasts. Chris Briers and Menno Parsons then returned with the T-28 Trojan and P51D Mustang in the North American formation. The Eqstra Flying Lions closed the show with their signature dusk display.

As the airshow was held within the confines of an active international airport with scheduled arrivals and departures which took precedence over displays some interruptions were

experienced. However, we got up close and personal with these airliners that passed very close to the crowd line whilst taxing to and from the active runway. Notwithstanding this the Trustco Namibia International airshow was a huge success. The sheer numbers through the gates testifies to the desire of the Namibian people for a quality airshow. The enthusiastic cheering from the crowd demonstrated the fact they were enjoying the show.

#### So what contributed to this success?

In my opinion the commitment of AOPA Namibia and the excellent co-operation between government and private industry to ensure a successful event. What a refreshing difference in that AOPA Namibia constructively engaged with Government. The aviation authorities and the Namibian DCA assisted with all the cross-border arrangements and by all accounts all

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visiting South African aircraft had smooth sailing. Of course it helps if the pilots and crew have all their ducks in a row. Brian Emmenis, with his Capital Sounds team ably assisted by Tanja Gärtner for the German commentary kept the crowd informed and entertained throughout the day. The South African display pilots and their support crews have to be congratulated. An example of which was young Jason Beamish, who departed in the mid afternoon to return Nigel Hopkins' Porsche sponsored MX-2 to Lanseria to ensure that the aircraft could be prepared for shipping to the world aerobatic championships in Belgium.

An airshow of this size cannot be successful without sponsors and support from many people and organisations. Title sponsors, Trustco Namibia, with the assistance of The Namibian

Government, Namibian DCA, Air Namibia (transport of many South African support crew), First FireServices, Sunshine tours, Azriel, SRM International, TransNamib Holdings, Welwitschia Insurance Brokers, NAC (Namibian Airport Company), Capital Sounds, Engen, One Africa Television, Innovations Tents, Cosmos 94.1 and of course AOPA Namibia for their passion for this event ensured that the Trustco Namibia International airshow was the success it was. Also thanks to Air Namibia for flying my wife Fiona and me to and from the airshow as well as to CDC Aviation / Kodiak for flying Janine Boessenkool, African Pilot's marketing manager to Namibia and back to Lanseria. Without your generous sponsorship this airshow would not have happened. Well done to all involved. However, please do not wait another 20 years for your next airshow! 🙏

*Hawker Hunter*

