



Confident: Ismail Demir

*Turkish Technic has been one of the MRO world's best-kept secrets, but that's about to change with the opening of its new Istanbul base. Chuck Grieve reports*

## Turkish Technic gears up for grand opening

**T**urkish Technic (stand 1151) comes to Dubai Air Show with a clear goal of being one of the world's top five MRO operations by 2020 and the opening of its new MRO base in Istanbul is a big step toward this target.

HABOM, the company's new MRO centre at Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, is scheduled to be fully open next March. When both hangars are operational, the facility will be one of the world's largest, with the capacity to handle 11 narrow-body and three wide-body aircraft simultaneously.

The new centre is opening stage-by-stage, bay-by-bay, over several months. The narrow-body hanger passed its first inspection in August and the first C-check was carried out in the autumn.

The grand plan is to concentrate on third-party business at HABOM, while continuing to carry out work on the fleet of main customer Turkish Airlines (THY) at the existing Ataturk International Airport facility.

General manager Dr Ismail Demir has already seen third-party business rise from about 8% of income when he took over in 2006 to about 30% in 2012.

Turkish Technic's success story is likely to surprise someone outside aviation circles. The company keeps a low profile. Those in the industry, however, will know that it has grown organically alongside THY.

Dr Demir is not unduly worried that Turkey's aviation industry lacks the 'star status' of some of the Gulf-based operations. He is confident that Turkey's time will come.

The country has capabilities rooted in aviation clusters, whose member companies are producing parts for manufacturers including Airbus, Boeing, Sikorsky and Goodrich. Turkey is developing its own projects as well, and may one day assemble complete aircraft, but this is beyond the remit of Turkish Technic.

### Joint venture

"Our role is not to become an aircraft manufacturer, nor to be an OEM ourselves. We prefer to work in a joint venture format."

The opening of Turkish Technic's own research and development (R&D) centre last November gave the company the chance to start working on its own innovative airframe and engine health monitoring solutions. The objective, said Dr Demir, is to develop active monitoring systems.

The company is investing in R&D to capture enough data to 'crunch' to create a good decision-making mechanism.

Dr Demir does not see the new MRO bases in the Gulf as direct competition. "I think there is a clear difference in our parameters," he said. "The investment in facilities is just one part of the equation.

"We're not aiming to create a maintenance base, even at HABOM," he said. "We have 183,000sqm of closed area. Just 60,000sqm of that is hangar. The rest is workshops, offices and related facilities.

"We are investing heavily in the component side of the business. OEMs dominate the aftermarket, so we are looking for joint operations. We prefer to work with OEMs as much as we can. "We aim to excel in areas including heavy modifications, VIP conversions, part manufacturing, design and development. It's a very wide spectrum."

Expansion abroad is on the cards too. Line stations are the natural vehicles for expansion abroad; Turkish Technic approaches it with a collaborative spirit. It ration-

alises that having a facility that will help Turkish Airlines will help others too. "It can be very hard to find qualified support," noted Dr Demir, "and if you can put that support in place, it's very valuable."

A consequence of developing capability for THY is an extensive parts and components inventory. Dr Demir considers it too much for an MRO alone and is proposing to share it. "That way it can be visible to everybody. We can open up that inventory to other airlines and ask them to open up their inventory to us.

"We're going to offer a programme for airlines, many in the Middle East, that think the same as us. Nobody wants to get into an aircraft on the ground (AOG) situation for lack of parts, but it can be too big an investment." ■



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