
OMC Aviation Section: Centerpiece to Egyptian Air Force Modernization and Sustainment

By

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The Aviation Section of OMC Cairo performs many of the same functions as those of other Aviation and Air Force sections in Security Assistance Organizations worldwide. What is different about our operation? First of all, Egypt receives grant aid security assistance from the United States. This allows the customer to subscribe to future programs with a sense of financial stability that may not be present in many other countries. Secondly, we are one of the largest sections in the Security Assistance business. We have 10 members on the immediate staff and over 80 military advisors in the field with a much larger number of supporting contractors. The Egyptian Air Force (EAF) has historically received the largest portion of the annual grant and has over \$10 billion in funded cases. Major programs include the Peace Vector series of F-16 fighters and F-4 fighters, C-130 transports, Apache and Chinook helicopters, and E-2C early warning aircraft. A third reason that we are different is that in addition to dealing with the U.S. Air Force, we work with the U.S. Navy (E-2C, SH-3) and the U.S. Army (Apache, Chinook, Buffalo, Blackhawk). The Aviation section has officers from all three services.



Egyptian Air Force F-16C Fighting Falcon

To understand our daily business, you must first understand more about the EAF. Unlike the U.S. military where all services fly aircraft, in Egypt, only the EAF flies aircraft. Not only does the EAF operate U.S. aircraft, but also French, Czechoslovakian, Russian, Chinese, and Egyptian aircraft. Some items of U.S. equipment, SH-3 and CH-47, were manufactured under license in England and Italy. The U.S. supports only a portion of the total EAF inventory. Managing the logistics support for any one service is a difficult task but when you combine three U.S. Services as well as seven other countries under both Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Commercial Contracts, you can see the formidable task that the EAF is facing. With an expanding inventory of U.S. hardware, the EAF has a growing pipeline to America with spare parts and returnables. The EAF is working to streamline this pipeline by developing in-country depot capability for certain components and automating the parts requisition and component repair process. To help manage this process, they have now established an Integrated Logistics System (ILS) built on the USAF model. Because of the varied suppliers, the EAF must build its own software to operate this computer-based logistics system. They are now about three-fourths of the way to their goal of automating all their logistics functions such as stock control, requisitions, repair and return, etc.

The USAF managed systems such as the F-16 and F-4 have been the first to be incorporated into this system followed by USN and USA systems and then other national systems. Converting thousands of stock numbers into compatible work unit codes (in the case of the Apache) is an enormous task but a necessary one if the system is to work. Likewise, identifying and converting thousands of part numbers from non-U.S. systems takes months of effort.

Against this background, our Aviation Section advises and assists the EAF in their modernization goals. As a new program develops, we work closely with the EAF to accurately convey their needs to the appropriate stateside managers. Advisory teams attached to the Aviation section help in base activation, training, and support. As a program matures and the EAF experience with the new system increases, the size of the advisory teams declines, and, in some cases, only a logistician remains to help interface with the U.S. supply system. We look for ways to make the system more efficient and responsive to the customer and to avoid obvious disconnects. We are only advisors and the customer has the right to make his own decisions, even if it differs from conventional U.S. practices or doctrine. In these cases, we work with the customer to explain our logic, but if they persist, we then press on to implement their desires.

Our biggest challenge is effective communication. Because of the sheer size and number of programs, we pass an enormous volume of messages, faxes, letters, and phone calls. A request from the EAF must first pass through their involved bureaucracy before it enters our equally involved bureaucracy. We often play the role of expediter in speeding the flow through and between both systems. We constantly strive for ways to make the support process more automated, especially for routine requisitions and tracking. Direct links between the customer and appropriate stateside agencies are not always in place. We are several years behind available technology in making communications flow faster. As an example, we get dozens of daily letters in Arabic from the customer that must be manually translated by OMC. We then manually retype the text into message format to transmit to the appropriate MILDEP for relay to the action agency. Replies are returned to OMC for forwarding to the EAF. We need to get more direct communication between the customer and the stateside agency with information copies to OMC, MILDEPS, and other policy levels. The use of scanners, CD-ROMs, E-Mail, etc., has not yet been fully exploited.

The future holds many challenges. As the EAF acquires more and more U.S. hardware, the need for efficient logistic support increases. As long as the grant relationship with the U.S. remains the same, additional acquisitions will occur but at a slower pace because of the need to support existing systems. Searching for efficiencies in the logistics process offers both countries the best chance to free up resources for future programs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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