

***In this issue, we are proud to share the interview of Can Erel, Chief Advisor to the Aviation Turkey Editorial Board with Mohamed Al Mohannadi, Gulf Helicopters CEO about his career and his company, Gulf Helicopter Company.***

*As a 100% subsidiary of Gulf International Services under the Qatar Petroleum (QP) umbrella, with headquarters in Doha, Qatar, Gulf Helicopter Company is a helicopter services provider mainly servicing the oil and gas industry in the Middle East, Europe, South and West Africa North Africa and India..*

*Gulf Helicopter Company is also a shareholder of Redstar Aviation Inc. located in Istanbul, Turkey.*



**Can Erel:** Who is Mohamed Al Mohannadi and where did the interest in Aviation first come from?

***Mohamed Al Mohannadi:*** *I always had an admiration for aircraft and aviation since childhood. When I reached the stage in my life to make the choice for higher education, it was a natural decision to be involved in this admiration and hence I decided to study in the field of aviation. The first of my studies in the field was in London, UK, which was later consolidated in Florida, USA. After obtaining my degrees, I officially took my first step into the industry with Gulf Air at Heathrow Airport as Station Manager. It was a challenging but also a very enjoyable task where I gained my most valuable experiences that helped shaped my future through hard work put forward on the ground.*

**Erel:** How did Al Mohannadi cross paths with the Gulf Helicopter Company and what are the latest developments so far?

**Al Mohannadi:** Gulf Air is where I started out in my aviation career. During my time at the the company, it was a partnership airline comprised of shareholders from the State of Qatar, Kingdom of Bahrain, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (on behalf of the United Arab Emirates), and

the Sultanate of Oman. After spending my years at various departments within Gulf Air with overseas responsibilities, my paths crossed with Gulf Helicopters Company, a subsidiary of Gulf Air at the time. I initially took on the role of Marketing and PR Manager at Gulf Helicopters Company in 1994, and was appointed as the CEO of the organization in 2008.

**Erel:** What can you say about your company's current aviation capabilities and activities?

***Al Mohannadi:** Gulf Helicopters Company is one of the leading commercial aviation services providers in the world. Our global footprint extends from Europe to Africa to the Middle East to South Asia and to the Far East. Founded in 1970 with the primary objective of catering to the needs of Qatar's Oil and Gas Industry, the company has grown over the years by leaps and bounds to successfully become a leading global aviation services provider. Gulf Helicopters Company has evolved to become a very unique organization in our field of operations with our fully owned and operated multi-type fleet, outstanding engineering capabilities under the roof of our in-house developed MRO, and state-of-the-art Flight Simulator Training Devices for Leonardo AW-139 and AW-189 types.*

*Now regarding some of the activities undertaken by Gulf Helicopters Company; from our humble beginnings, we have grown over the years as an International Aviation Service provider serving both Domestic and International Oil and Gas Companies and numerous other globally recognized major clients. Over the years, we have earned ample recognition across the world operating from Europe to the Middle East and to the Far East. Our global footprint covers our current and past operations in countries such as State of Qatar, Türkiye, Germany, Denmark, Malta, Libya, Sudan, South Africa, Republic of Iran, Republic of Yemen, Sultanate of Oman, Kuwait, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Thailand, Morocco, Tunisia and Timor-Leste.*

**Erel:** How did your company interest in Turkish aviation? What would you like to say about the current and future activities of Gulf Helicopter Company ?

***Al Mohannadi:** We as Gulf Helicopters Company, have always been interested in extending our scope of operations overseas whether it be in the form of a commercial partnership or as shareholders in local operators within the areas of interest. Türkiye has been a long standing part of our investment strategy where we have participated in some large scale international tenders. Realizing the volume and growth potential of the Turkish aviation industry, we have taken an undoubted decision of establishing a presence in Türkiye.*

*We became a shareholder of Redstar Aviation ([www.redstar.com.tr](http://www.redstar.com.tr)) in mid-2015 after local approvals and procedures and have been focusing on developing the company's activities through re-structuring of the organization and by setting our mid and long-term targets. The acquisition of shares in Redstar Aviation has been a different challenge for us since Gulf Helicopters Company is solely focused on rotor-wing operations whereas the core-business of Redstar Aviation has been—and still is—heavily focused on the provision of fixed-wing air ambulance services. This convergence of the two companies has introduced new horizons in the service diversification of Gulf Helicopters Company.*

*At the time of acquisition of Redstar shares, the company was in an 'idle' position, so to speak, with limited assets—a single tuboprop aircraft—and the extent of its limited activities as one low-range workhorse. Thanks to our team, Redstar Aviation has now become a globally recognized and internationally accredited air ambulance operator in the field of fixed-wing*

*operations and is steadily establishing her presence in becoming an offshore operator at an identical level with Gulf Helicopters Company.*

*Gulf Helicopters Company will continue to invest in the Turkish aviation industry, collectively for Redstar Aviation and for other possible ventures. We will do our best to add value and create a mutually beneficial financial environment by transferring the excellent know-how and providing enrichment through the wide-ranging experience in our sphere of operations that has accumulated in the last five decades our long history.*



**Erel:** How do you see Turkey's position in your company's future business projection?

*Al Mohannadi: We see Türkiye as an integral part of our operations and as a crucial part of our future growth strategy. Thanks to Türkiye's natural geographical position, being there places you at a crossroads between the East and the West, as well as the North and the South and places you at an arm's length to a very large geographic and economic area. Türkiye's large and well-trained young population, the ever-growing aviation industry, ultra large scale infrastructure investments undertaken by its government are making it even more appealing for organizations who are interested in investing further in Türkiye.*

*Besides all of the above, we have a tangible case in Redstar Aviation which has fully met our expectations through the demonstrated pace in growth within the last five years of our existence in the Turkish market. We are currently operating four Bombardier Learjet 45XR's for global air ambulance operations and two Leonardo AW139 Helicopters for domestic offshore operations with concrete plans to expand the fleet with two more aircraft for each fixed-wing and rotor-wing segment in FY 2020. When we became shareholders in Redstar Aviation in 2015, there were only 12 employees on our payroll. As of Nov. 2019, the company's headcount is only two short of becoming a triple-digit number at 98. Additionally, we have recently invested in an Aircraft Maintenance and Parking Hangar at Istanbul Atatürk Airport which I believe is a strong indication of our vision in Türkiye.*

*We, as Gulf Helicopters Company, in principle prefer our actions to verify our intentions and commitments than the words spreading out of anyone's mouth. The very tangible example of our future projections related to Türkiye is set by Redstar Aviation which I believe is the largest Foreign Direct Investment made for an Air Taxi company in Türkiye. Unfortunately, I cannot verify the same as no date is available on the subject matter but perhaps Aviation Turkey might do the research and bring a conclusion to my proposition.*

**Erel:** Will we be able to see your industrial and aviation activities (i.e. MROs or pilot and maintenance personnel training centers) in our country soon?

**Al Mohannadi:** *Certainly yes!*

*We, as Gulf Helicopters Company, are also very interested in extending our presence in Türkiye by diversifying our portfolio. A few years back, we actually had an attempt to place our second Flight Simulator Training Device in Istanbul but without success. I would hate to give negative publicity, but I also feel myself obliged to mention that due to the lack of co-operation between the governmental agencies, we had to channel our investment to another country. Nevertheless, we have not given up and will continue to pursue other opportunities to expand our activities in Türkiye.*

*One other area of potential activity, as you rightly mentioned, is in the field of MRO services. We have already started working on mirroring the capabilities held by Gulf Helicopters Company in Doha to Redstar Aviation in Istanbul to serve the local operators and neighboring countries under the roof of our very recently acquired hangar facility at Istanbul Atatürk Airport. On the other hand, we have learned through experience by operating Bombardier Learjet 45XR's that there is a huge flow of expenditures from Turkish private aircraft owners to European MRO's. We have identified this segment as an area of potential investment and are currently considering our options on whether to develop our internal capabilities or to access the same market through another M&A.*

**Erel:** What are your expectations from Turkey and Turkish aviators to meet your plans and expectations?

**Al Mohannadi:** *We have special relations and ties to Türkiye. It has always been more than business or anything in the form of business. Hence, we always only wish the very best for Türkiye and its people. As we spend more time in the Turkish market, we realize that Türkiye has deep roots in the field of aviation. Türkiye is a country that is capable of even manufacturing their own helicopters! The blend of such capability together with the cultivated young population is making life quite easy for us. We expect Türkiye to remain on this path and to set an example for countries like us among which the trade would develop on a natural basis.*

*The only area we would humbly advise would be for an establishment of an environment for foreign direct investors such as Gulf Helicopters Company and the likes. As an aviation professional that has been operating and investing in a variety of countries in different continents, I strongly believe that there is much to be fulfilled in Türkiye and at the current age of communications and finances, it is vital to attract investments. However, the most important of all is sustainability and value-adding investments which we believe have been offering to the Turkish aviation industry.*



**Erel:** Is there anything you would like to add?

*Al Mohannadi:* Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to express myself and convey my thoughts on this precious magazine. I must also confess, most importantly congratulate you for achieving such a high quality product under the name of Aviation Turkey in such a short period of time. The last issue of Aviation Turkey that I had reviewed is already a self-spoken example of an educating, guiding and inspiring publication. We wish you best of luck and prosperity with Aviation Turkey's future publications!

**Erel:** Thank you for your time shared with us, Aviation Turkey. Hope to visit and see Gulf Helicopter Company operations and facilities in Doha, Qatar soon.