

FAMEX 2017



Down Mexico way !

From 26 to 29 April 2017 the second edition of the *Feria Aeroespacial México* (FAMEX) was held at Base Aérea Militar No. 1 Santa Lucía to the north of Mexico City. With over 550 exhibitors, the event has almost doubled in size compared to the first edition in 2015. The official inauguration of the event was on 26 April 2017, with President Enrique Peña Nieto, President of the Republic of Mexico, confirming importance of the show for the Mexican Government. As Rodolfo Rodríguez Quezada, President of the FAMEX stated: “The goal of the event is to bring together the most important

aerospace companies to promote and support Mexico’s aerospace industry. FAMEX aims to become a business centre for the exchange of technology and services and become a platform to support Mexico’s penetration into the sector.” The Mexican Air Force (FAM) participated majorly in the event to support these goals.

Static display

The static display consisted mainly of modern types active within the different branches of the Defence Forces: The Air Force, Navy and *Policía Federal*. Besides that, the Air Force museum provided some

static assets while Aero México showed both their oldest as well as their latest aircraft. The only foreign military participant was an A400M from the Spanish Air Force.

Unfortunately, there were no fighter displays at FAMEX 2017, whereas the 2015 edition had included some F-5 formation flying. Contrary to recent reports that the type was withdrawn from service in September 2016, the F-5 still soldiers on in Mexican service. Of eight F-5s with Escuadrón Aéreo 401 at Santa Lucía Air Base, four are still operational while the other four are awaiting refurbished engines from RUAG, the Swiss company. No



FAMEX in large numbers, with more than 25 aircraft performing fly pasts in different configurations. Since 2012, the training capabilities of the Mexican Air Force have been given a boost by the T-6C+ which have gradually replaced the PC-7 in the process.

Despite having modern training aircraft, the FAM still relies on proven types for basic flying training. The syllabus of the Colegio del Aire (Air College) starts with training on the Cessna 182S and even PT-13 and PT-17 Stearmans are being used (6 remain in service). The SIAI-Marchetti F260EU is being replaced by the Grob G120TP-A, of which more than 70 are scheduled to be

delivered. Only two examples were seen during the show, owing to the distance from their home base to Santa Lucía.

A large part of both the static and aerial display was performed by helicopters of the FAM. Main attraction of the show was a large helicopter fly-by and on-site landing of several types in service, including the recently acquired UH-60Ms, MD530MG, Bell 412EP and Mi-17s. The FAM currently has two units operating the UH-60M; Escuadrón Aéreo 108 based at Monterrey and Escuadrón Aéreo 101 at Santa Lucía. Besides these, both the Mexican Navy (*Marina*) and *Policía Federal* use the type, both being present at FAMEX.



Bell 412 and UH-60 at the Show

decision has been taken on the replacement of the fighters although Russia has been pushing the MiG-35 as an option. Still, no fighters other than the locally based F-5s were to be found in the static display at FAMEX.

Of the recently delivered T-6C+ aircraft (deliveries started in 2012), many airframes were with hard-point wings, Head-Up Display and integrated glass display, enabling fighter pilot training to a certain extent.

With over 50 T-6C+ delivered to the Mexican Air Force and Navy, it was no surprise that this type was present at



The Fuerza Aerea Mexicana at present has just a handful of F-5E/Fs



The FAM now has only two ex-RAF C-130Ks in service

Also present were several Mi-17s of Escuadrón Aéreo 303, which has become the backbone of the transport helicopter force. Out of the 24 originally delivered to the FAM, nineteen have been upgraded and another fourteen Mi-171s are currently on order.

An interesting type on the static display was a Bell 407GX of Escuadrón Aéreo 111 carrying a Simplex Aerospace Model 208 Spray System used for “anti-narcotic operations,” the helicopters flown on a daily basis from Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) all over the country.

For the near future, the FAM intends to buy another 46 helicopters for training, liaison and SAR to replace the aging fleet of Bell 206s. The types currently under consideration are the Airbus H125 and the Bell 407GX.

The flying display at FAMEX had participation of some new types in transport

fleet of the Mexican Air Force, with mixed formations of the C295s and C-27. The FAM uses two versions of the C295; the C295M and the updated C295W. The latter was shown during FAMEX in the static display. Of the C-27s delivered to the FAM, one was on the static display. Out of the large fleet of C-130 Hercules aircraft once active (including C-130A, C-130E and C-130K subtypes) only two former RAF C-130K remain operational. The FAM tried to buy two new C-130J-30 airlifters but the Air Force is now looking for another long-range transport aircraft. Airbus sent a new A400M to FAMEX, the aircraft considered as one of the highlights in the static display. At the FAMEX inauguration ceremony, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto visited the cabin together with the Spanish ambassador to Mexico, Luis Fernandez-Cid, and head of the logistic support command (MALOG),

Lt Gen Jose Maria Orea Malo.

With the recent (February 2017) retirement of the Boeing 727s, VIP-transport duties are performed by three B737-800s.

The *Coordinacion General de Transportes Aereos Presidenciales* (CGTAP) or Presidential Flight also showed off some of its aircraft on the opening day, when the President and many high-ranking officials were flown in from Mexico City for the inauguration.

The Mexican Air Force obviously took great pains to make FAMEX 2017 a success, and with more exhibitors and visitors, this seems to have worked. Flying displays were mainly conducted by the FAM, with no demonstrations from major aerospace companies which was somewhat surprising; perhaps they will at the next Show in 2019 ?

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