

IHS Jane's Airport Review

April 2017

Complex projects in the Middle East and North Africa entailed close support

US-based construction and project consultancy Hill International is tapping into airport opportunities in the Middle East and North Africa, company executives told *Jane's* .

Hill has strong domestic experience, with a portfolio including Boston Logan, Los Angeles, Newark Liberty, Phoenix Sky Harbor, and San Francisco international airports, to name but a few.



In Oman, Hill International provided consultancy services for construction of Muscat (pictured) and Salalah international airports. (Hill International)

In the Middle East, Hill is the principal design consultant for the USD5.2 billion expansion and modernisation of Muscat and Salalah international airports in Oman. Passenger traffic in the sultanate is on the increase; figures from Oman Airport Management Company (OAMC) show 14.7% year-on-year growth at Muscat in January 2017 alone, along with an 11% increase in aircraft movements, and a 31% increase in cargo.

Designed by COWI-Larsen to meet International Air Transport Association (IATA) Service Level A standards, Muscat International Airport has initial annual capacity for 12 million passengers.

The Oman Public Authority for Civil Aviation has also upgraded aeronautical data systems with aeronautical message-handling system (AMHS) and Aeronautical Integrated Data Exchange-Next Generation (AIDA-NG) from Comsoft Solutions now operational.

Salalah International Airport - also designed by COWI-Larsen - saw a 12.6% year-on-year increase in passenger volume in January 2017. "The Salalah airport is operational now. The only remaining work is upgrade of existing runway and it will be substantially completed by mid-April, with testing and commissioning by the end of April," said Adel Merhi, Hill International vice-president and country manager for Oman.

Work at Salalah "is actually a rebuild on the existing airport site", he added. The upgrade transforms Salalah from an essentially domestic airport to cater for international flights. Features of the rebuilt airport include a new 4,000 m-long runway to handle the A380; a 57 m-high air traffic control tower; and eight contact stands. While OAMC awaits full international certification for Salalah, it serves charter flights and regional flights from Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.



A major project for Hill International was TB2 at Cairo International Airport, Egypt. (Hill International) Hill was also involved in the Terminal Building 2 (TB2) project at Cairo International Airport in Egypt. As one of the three refurbished terminals in Cairo to undergo a soft launch in 2016, TB2 increased passenger capacity from 3.5 million to around 8 million per annum. The project undertaken by Hill included a power plant, airside and landside works, and service tunnels.

Waleed Abdel Fattah, Hill senior vice-president for North Africa, said that Cairo was not only upgraded and expanded to cope with rising demand, but also to "upgrade the security level ... to international levels".

The project was not without its challenges, he added, such as the inclusion of Hill only after construction started. To manage the project efficiently, "we had to introduce and develop some of the systems and procedures quickly, to get up to speed".

World Bank funding included mandatory and detailed project risk analysis, to be updated on regular basis with corrective and preventive action highlighted. Furthermore, the high rate of currency fluctuation affected imported items, increasing cost, and having multiple participants "with complicated expectations, the project required close monitoring and management of all stakeholders engagement during execution", added Abdel Fattah.

ASIA OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES

Hill is also pursuing projects at Asian airports. It is particularly keen to move into the Indian aviation market, where it awaits the result of a tender to provide project management services for expansion of Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in Delhi.

"An outcome is imminent," said Abdo Kardous, Hill managing director and senior vice-president Asia-Pacific. "The project will have a new runway; an upgraded domestic terminal with additional gates and parking area; and landside works for airport access that include improving tunnels and highways."

IGIA operator GMR is awarding the tender, and it is also developing the greenfield Mopa Airport in Goa. If Hill wins the contract at Delhi, Kardous is hopeful that it "will open up opportunities for us with the other projects that GMR is planning to build".

Elsewhere, Hill aims to provide professional services for the expansion project at Hong Kong International Airport. "We are also trying to get a piece of the action at the Singapore [Changi Airport], which plans to build a new Terminal 5," added Kardous.