

NAMIBIA AIR FORCE.....(ex NAMIBIA DEFENCE FORCE Air Wing)

The Namibia Air Force was formally commissioned on 13 March 2005 at a ceremony at the ex-SAAF Grootfontein Base in north east Namibia. It was presided over by President Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia, and two recently delivered MiG-21s participated in the flypast and air display. These are said to be two of the three MiG-21s received via IAI in Israel where spotters had seen two MiG-21bis and a single MiG-21UM on 14 April 2002.

However let us go back to the beginning.

Namibia gained independence on the 21 March 1990, after having been the trust territory of South West Africa and administered by the South African Government from about 1918. During the period 1966 and 1989 bloody clashes took place between firstly the South African Police, who were at the forefront of law and order in that country and members of SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation). When the Police could no longer contain the clashes, the South African Government introduced large numbers of troops, vehicles and equipment. In the North of the country, Ovamboland, "operational areas" were declared. This in effect made the residents subject to martial law. In their attempts to stem the flow of SWAPO troops into Namibia, numerous across border raids into neighbouring Angola were carried out by South African troops, vehicles and military aircraft.

Finally in 1988 agreement was reached between the various parties, whereby United Nations forces would supervise local elections. Approximately 8000 UN forces were stationed in Namibia to supervise the elections which took place between 7 and 11 November 1989. SWAPO won a large majority and were elected to govern, independence being formally achieved on the 21 March 1990.

Identifying the need for governmental aircraft, the first aircraft to be purchased was a Falcon 900 for Presidential use, and was delivered in July 1992.

Namibia took delivery of six former USAF Cessna 0-2A light observation aircraft. They were delivered to Eros Airport outside Windhoek on 26 June 1994, for use in the anti-poaching, anti-smuggling role, and coastal surveillance. These had previously been stored at Davis-Monthan AFB. It is not commonly known that during this same period two and nine Cessna 0-2's respectively were delivered to the governments of Zimbabwe and Botswana They were allocated air force serials and are operated mainly in the anti-poaching role by the respective air forces.

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) handed over four military helicopters; two SA315B Cheetahs and two SA316B Chetak's during November 1994. These are Aerospatiale SA315 Alouette II's and SA316 Alouette III's built under licence in India by HAL. The Cheetahs are used in the training role and one Chetak (H-704) was painted white and used for VIP transport. It is not known whether these were purchased or received as donations. It is also not known whether these are new-build or refurbished units.

One of Namibia's major sources of governmental income is revenue received from the fishing industry. The sea off Namibia is rich in fish such as pilchard, anchovy, maasbanker and mackerel. The coastline is 1000 miles in length, and the outer fishing limit is 200 miles off the coast. This represents 200,000 sq miles of sea patrolling. During 1993 the Ministry of Sea Fisheries took delivery of a Sikorsky S-61L helicopter registered V5-HSP, for sea patrol purposes and to assist in sea rescue operations. The sea off Namibia is treacherous and many a ship or trawler has floundered in the past. Another type used by the Ministry of Sea Fisheries is a Reims Cessna F406 V5-EEZ, delivery being taken in 1994.

A number of helicopters and aircraft were on the strength of the previous administration and these were also transferred to the new government.

At the beginning of 1995 the Government of Namibia took delivery of a Gates Learjet 31A for governmental use. During early 1996 the President of Namibia and senior members of his government were given a short test flight in a Harbin Y-12II (serial AF216) belonging to the Zambian Air Force. During 1996/97 an order was placed for two Harbin Y-12II light transports. These were delivered during December 1997 by Chinese crews.

During late 1998 Namibia became involved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) struggle against the rebels who entered that country from the east. Initial reports indicated that Namibia had only supplied troops to support the forces of President Laurent Kabila against the rebels. However this perception changed when two helicopters collided in mist/fog in the DRC during the weekend of 16/17 January 1999 and 11 occupants were killed, of which 5 were Namibian. It has since transpired that the two helicopters were in actual fact a Namibian Chetak & a Cheetah. One of the crew killed included the personal pilot of President Sam Nujoma. This implies that H-702 and H-708

were written off, as H-704 and H-706 were seen in July 1999 at Eros Airport.

The Namibia Defence Force was to have taken delivery in January 2000 of four HAL Chetaks. Two would be replacements for the two helicopters lost in DRC and the other two would be additional. As can be seen in recent reports, this did not happen. An order for four NAMC K-8 Karakorum jet trainers was placed late in 1999. Indications are that 4 were received and some have been seen flying from the main international airport.

The Namibia Air Force has received two MiG-23s, and they have been seen at Grootfontein in the north. Reports indicate that they were delivered by Angola. The Namibia Air Force is reported to have 2 Mi-8s and 2 Mi-24/35 in 2002. Newspaper reports from Windhoek indicate these came from the President of Libya, Colonel Ghaddafi as a gift. They arrived in June 2002 on the eve of the inauguration of the African Union in South Africa. Other deliveries have been 2 Antonov An-26s in 2001, said to be from Libya to strengthen the transport force.

In September 2004 an order was placed for 2 Agusta Bell A139 helicopters for VIP use. The latest deliveries have been Shenyang F-7NM fighters, with the serials seen so far indicating that up to 9 being delivered, although some sources indicate 12, of which 2 may be dual-seat trainers.

The latest orders (June 2009) appear to be placed on HAL for 2 x Chetak and 1 x Cheetah.

As in any other Air Force accidents happen, and Namibia is no exception. A Mi-8 was reported to have made a heavy landing on or about 27 November 2003, so heavy it was not likely to fly again. On 1 August 2008, a HAL Chetak (H-706) crashed near Opuwo, injuring the crew and passengers.

A 28 December 2002 Google image of Grootfontein shows:

- 2 x Antonov An-26 transports
- 2 x Mi-8 helicopters
- 2 x Mi-35 type gunships
- 1 x Harbin Y-12II light transport

A more recent Google image (6 May 2007) of Grootfontein:

- 4 x MiG-21 type fighters
- 2 x Harbin Y-12II light transports
- 2 x Antonov An-26 transports,
- 3 x NAMC K-8 trainers
- 1 x Cessna O-2
- 2 x Mi-24/35 type gunships
- 1 x Mi-8 helicopter



INFRASTRUCTURE

Most of the helicopters are based at Eros Airport, a few miles outside of Windhoek. Eros airport is also the home base of the majority of the light aircraft registered in Namibia. Its main asphalt runway is 6000ft in length. Namibia inherited numerous airfields of a high quality after independence. These airfields were built with South African funds during the so-called "Border War". They were built along Namibia's border with Angola and stretch from Ruacana in the west to Mpacha (Katima Mulio) in the east.

Ruacana airfield is built near the Ruacana Hydro Electric Power Station, near the mouth of the Cunene river, which draws water from the same river. This power station is the main source of electric power for Namibia. The runways are of asphalt with the longest being 7000 ft in length. The following airfield is at Ondangwa which is 50 miles south of the Angolan border, and 250 miles east of Ruacana. It is built on the outskirts of the town of the same name. The runways are of asphalt and the longest is 7500 ft. This airfield was a major air force base for the South African Air Force (SAAF) during the "Border War". Aircraft stationed there from time to time were Dakotas for the daily or weekly "milk run", supplying the military bases along the Angolan border, C-130B Hercules, C-160 Transalls, Cessna 185 observation aircraft, AM3C Bosbok communication and observation aircraft, Atlas C-4M Kudu light transport and communication aircraft and helicopters such as SA330C/H Pumas, SA321 Super Frelons and the reliable SA316/319 Alouette III. Helicopter detachments were stationed at other bases for their role in "CASEVAC", casualty evacuation. Stationed at Ondangwa for most of the duration of the "Border War" were Atlas Impala MkII light strike aircraft. These were supplemented by Mirage IIICZs, Mirage F1AZ/CZ's, Buccaneer and Canberra bombers as the need arose. 250 miles to the East of Ondangwa is Rundu. This was also a major air force base for the SAAF. Strikes into Angola were normally launched from Rundu and/or Ondangwa. The runways are of asphalt and the longest is 7500 ft in length. Situated at the eastern end of the Caprivi Strip is the airfield of Mpacha near the small town of Katima Mulilo. The runways are of asphalt and the longest is 7500 ft.

The main airport for Namibia is Windhoek International some 40 miles to the East of Windhoek. It has a main asphalt runway of 15000 ft. Lesser known airfields with asphalt runways are at Walvis Bay (7000 ft), Keetmanshoop (7600 ft) and Karibib (8500 ft). The town of Grootfontein in the north east of the country was used by the South African Defence Force as the logistics base supplying the northern bases. The airfield is situated on the outskirts of the town and the military base was adjacent to the airfield. The runways are of asphalt and the longest is 8800 ft in length.



GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT:

Reg	Type	c/n	d/d	fate
V5-EEZ	Reims Cessna F406	F406-004	.94	status not known
V5-HKD	Bell 407	53081		
V5-HKT	Eurocopter AS350B Ecureuil	1226	03.91	ex N350GC, ZS-HKT
V5-HNG	Eurocopter AS350B Ecureuil	1791	03.91	ex ZS-HNG to ZS-HNG
V5-HNG(2)	Agusta Bell 139	31008	09.04	
V5-HNM	Agusta Bell 139	31009	.04	
V5-HNP	Eurocopter AS350B3 Ecureuil	4548	02.09	
V5-HRN	Eurocopter AS350D Ecureuil	1877	04.91	ex ZS-HRN to ZS-HRN
V5-HSP	Sikorsky S-61L	61-427	07.93	ex N619PA, ZS-HHP, LV-OMG, ZS-HHP wfu, canx 10.11..99
V5-HTJ	Eurocopter AS350B Ecureuil	2880		ex F-WQDE, to V5-HTJ, then ZS-RWY, then 5Y-EXF
V5-LCA	Piper PA42-720 Cheyenne III	42-8001030	04.91	ex N40764, ZS-LCA went 21.12.94 to N930CA, N21MS, F-GOON, N855GA, C-GPSB canx 06.07
V5-LGR	Piper PA32R-301 Saratoga SP	32R-8113012	03.91	ex N4296Y, ZS-LGR returned to ZS-LGR 12.12.94
V5-LSW	Beech 58 Baron	TH-1505	03.91	ex ZS-LSW returned to ZS-LSW 05.95
V5-NAM	Dassault Falcon 900B	103	07.92	ex F-WWFJ/F-GHYB/ F-WWFL
V5-NAG	Bombardier Learjet 31A	091	01.95	ex N5019Y



Presidential Dassault Falcon
900B V5-NAM



Reims Cessna F406 V5-EEZ



Bombardier Learjet 31A
V5-NAG at Lanseria



Sikorsky S-61L V5-HSP

NAMIBIA AIR FORCE:

8-0872	Cessna 0-2A	337M-0237	26.06.94	ex USAF 68-10872/AMARC HV248
69-602	Cessna 0-2A	337M-0400	26.06.94	ex USAF 69-7602/AMARC HV206
69-605	Cessna 0-2A	337M-0403	26.06.94	ex USAF 69-7605/AMARC HV243
9-7628	Cessna 0-2A	337M-0426	26.06.94	ex USAF 69-7628/AMARC HV259
9-7640	Cessna 0-2A	337M-0438	26.06.94	ex USAF 69-7640/AMARC HV254
69-651	Cessna 0-2A	337M-0449	26.06.94	ex USAF 69-7651/AMARC HV260

H 702	HAL SA316B Chetak	AH...	11.94	w/o 16.01.99
H 704	HAL SA316B Chetak	AH326	11.94	VIP config cur 07.99
H 706	HAL SA315 Cheetah	CH210	11.94	cur 07.99, w/o 01.08.08
H 708	HAL SA315 Cheetah	CH...	11.94	w/o 16.01.99

NDF97-639	Harbin Y-12II	104	12.97	ex
NDF97-600	Harbin Y-12II	105	12.97	ex

NAF-3-644	Antonov An-26	14307	2001	ex RA-26239, Lw5211
	Antonov An-26		2001	ex
	MiG-23		seen 01.2000	ex-FAPA Angola
	MiG-23		seen 01.2000	ex-FAPA Angola

Some sources indicate 12 received, but knowing the numbering system of recording equal digits only 4 were received.

6-502	NAMC K-8		2006	seen Otjiwarongo Air Show 2008
(6-504)	NAMC K-8		2006	
6-506	NAMC K-8		2006	seen Windhoek
6-508	NAMC K-8		2006	seen Windhoek

H-804	Mil Mi-8		.06.2002	
(H-802)	Mil Mi-8		.06.2002	
	Mil Mi-24/35		.06.2002	
	Mil Mi-24/35		.06.2002	

Three MiG-21s – 2 MiG-21bis and a single MiG-21UM were seen at IAI in Israel on 14.04.02 destined for Namibia.

MiG-21bis	N75085304	2004	seen 14.04.02 at IAI
MiG-21bis	N75097455	2004	seen 14.04.02 at IAI
MiG-21UM	516999499	2004	seen 14.04.02 at IAI

Some reports indicate that up to 12 x F-7NMs have been delivered, and the serials below indicate at least 10, and 2 x FT-7NG dual-seat trainers.

0310	Shenyang F-7NM	01.2008	
0313	Shenyang F-7NM	01.2008	
0315	Shenyang F-7NM	01.2008	
0319	Shenyang F-7NM	01.2008	
	Shenyang FT-7NG	10.2006	
	Shenyang FT-7NG	10.2006	

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Two views of HAL SA315
Cheetah H-706





Various images of the Cessna O-2s received in 1994





Two views of Namibian Mi-8s



View of a Mi-8 after its crash, date not known





Assortment of Shenyang F-7NMs



Harbin Y-12II, one of two received





Reported to be one of the Mi-24/35s received

AS350B Ecureuil V5-HNG



AS350D Ecureuil V5-HKT

Namibia Police
AS350B3 Ecureuil
V5-HNP



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