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# A global approach to GA

**While cultures vary, issues facing aviation are universal** By Thomas B. Haines

Little support by the government for "rich people" and their aircraft. A government concerned about terrorist attacks by small aircraft. Airspace dominated by the influential military. An AOPA lobbyist in Washington bemoaning another day at the office? No, Yaron Efrat, president of AOPA-Israel, describing the general aviation situation in his small, young country.

"But this will not discourage us!" Efrat rallies. "We will force the issue of understanding the economic, technology, and educational benefits of general aviation."

A kaleidoscope of hues color the flags of the 68 members of the International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations, yet the issues facing general aviation in each of those countries look surprisingly the same, as the group discovered during its twenty-fifth World Assembly. IAOPA held its latest biennial assembly in Tel Aviv, Israel, in June, where representatives of 18 member countries joined together to share ideas on protecting GA, heard from world regulatory agencies on pending issues, approved resolutions in support of aviation, and traded hangar tales as pilots might anywhere.

IAOPA was formed in 1962 by AOPA affiliates from Canada, South Africa, Australia, the Philippines, and the United States. Today, the organization represents some 470,000 pilots in 68 countries. IAOPA is the only official general aviation observer at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which coordinates international policies that allow aviation to flow nearly seamlessly among countries.

As host of the world assembly, the effusive Efrat told how pilots in Israel, which is about one-twentieth the size of California, have worked with the Israeli Civil Aviation Authority to make GA there stronger and safer. For example, AOPA-Israel was able to convince authorities that high fuel prices were keeping pilots from flying very many hours. This lack of proficiency contributed to a high accident rate. To help encourage pilots to fly, the government worked with suppliers to lower fuel prices by nearly 40 percent, making them among the least expensive in the Middle East.

Sparking such growth in general aviation worldwide is a primary goal of IAOPA, according to Craig Fuller, who, in addition to being president and CEO of AOPA-U.S., is president of IAOPA. In his opening comments, Fuller predicted that as the economy improves, GA will grow. "This industry is resilient. The world still needs transportation and the need for face-to-face meetings is not declining."

Geronimo Amurao, head of AOPA-Philippines, concurred. "General aviation is a solution to travel issues in Southeast Asia. GA will thrive because of the need for transportation services."

## Tested by fire

The challenges facing GA worldwide are staggering, and most of them stem from a lack of understanding and appreciation by government leaders. In his state of the association report, John Sheehan, IAOPA secretary general, described how some countries require full firefighting gear to be available on airports with just one operation a day, driving costs beyond reason. To address this, the group approved a resolution that representatives could take back to their own countries to show that an official international general aviation body discouraged such a one-size-fits-all response to such issues.

Other resolutions passed by the world assembly encourage national governments to protect airports, recognize light sport aircraft, and simplify overly complex pilot training and certification standards. All in all, the members passed 17 resolutions that will be

taken back to ICAO and their own governments. As Sheehan pointed out to the group, “It all comes down to influencing the people who can help you get what you want.”

Success, according to Fuller, will mean growth for general aviation worldwide and more influence. He challenged the 68 member countries to increase the number of AOPA members worldwide by 68,000 members before the next world assembly in two years. “We are challenged not by other aviation associations,” Fuller said, “but by competing interests, activities, and messages.”

While much work was conducted during three solid days of meetings, the group also took time for touring and learning. AOPA Foundation President Bruce Landsberg used a series of accident reports to show that the laws of physics transcend international borders. Aviation educators John and Martha King of King Schools demonstrated ways to include risk management in every flight.

A group of European pilots who had flown to Tel Aviv managed to do the Med, the Dead, and the Red—use of their airplanes allowed them to dip a toe in the Mediterranean Sea, Dead Sea, and Red Sea, all in one day. A tour of one of Israel’s most active general aviation airports showed that general aviation looks the same worldwide, and faces the same issues—neighbors that have encroached the airport now complain about noise. A tour of Israel Aerospace Industries included a briefing on the Gulfstream 250, a business jet designed and built by IAI for Gulfstream Aerospace in the United States. Additional tours of Jerusalem, the ancient mountaintop fortress of Masada, and the Dead Sea gave the group a chance to explore other parts of Israel (see “[Lowest Airfield on Earth](#),” November 2009 *AOPA Pilot*).

## **\$10 gas and three ounces of water**

In the end, though, it was the common theme of aviation that bonded the group, with many coveting a GA community as robust as that in the United States. Issei Imahashi of AOPA-Japan, for example, told of reasonable costs at Japan’s 100 public airports. Overnight parking is \$8.50. Hangars are just \$220 a month. However, fuel is \$10 a gallon, and all aircraft are required to pay an annual airworthiness fee that for a simple Cessna 172 runs \$6,500. A mandatory 50-hour inspection costs \$850; an annual avionics inspection costs \$2,000, and insurance costs equate to 4 to 5 percent of the hull value of the aircraft annually.

HaeWoon Lee from the Republic of Korea described how he essentially founded general aviation in that country. In what he called the “Jurassic Era,” prior to 1998, general aviation flying was prohibited except for ultralights, which were required to stay below 500 feet agl and within three miles of the airport. Lee purchased a wrecked Cessna 210 in 1998 and registered as a private pilot. He worked at restoring the 210 until 2003 and then had to work with Korean authorities to establish a means to register a privately owned aircraft in the country. Today there are some 18 aircraft for rent in South Korea.

Tony Rees faces similar problems in Botswana. There, only 103 of the country’s 726 pilots hold private certificates. The country is home to only 184 airplanes. Aviation officials frequently don’t grasp general aviation’s abilities and limitations. For example, some inspectors have refused to allow pilots flying Cessna 172s across the desert nation to carry bottles of water because they exceed the three ounces of liquid that passengers can carry on board airliners. Fortunately, the president of Botswana is an active general aviation pilot and a frequent advocate for those flying light airplanes.

Regardless of the challenges facing pilots throughout the world, the experience of flight makes the battle to protect general aviation worthwhile, the officials agree. “I think that flying is one of the expressions of being a human being,” reminded Efrat, an experienced Israeli Air Force fighter pilot and enthusiastic GA pilot. “You can’t explain to someone who hasn’t done it himself. The sensation of freedom is something that only a few people have the ability to know and it’s an important part of a country.”

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