



“What significance do 3,000 housing units have in comparison with our link to the outside world and other cities?” In one sentence Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai summed up the value of aviation to an open and growing trading hub like Israel.

He was speaking about Sde Dov, a Tel Aviv airport which may soon be demolished to make room for upmarket beachfront apartments. The airport handles over 36,000 movements a year of which over 600 are business aviation flights. Remove it, and you remove a crucial element of the country’s bizav infrastructure.

Like Sde Dov, business aviation is vital to Israel’s economy. There are 4,650 business aviation departures annually from the country, with business aviation flights representing 4.3% of the country’s total aviation traffic.

But the sector also faces threats. So much so that at a recent meeting, business aviation operators and suppliers set out a clear programme to address industry challenges, many of which come to the surface, not at Sde Dov, but at Israel’s main airport Ben Gurion.

With three runways and four terminals, Ben Gurion should provide ample capacity for business aviation. The reality, according to operators, is that getting slots is a headache, and the hopes for improved bizav infrastructure are slim.

Single-runway airports like Geneva put Ben Gurion’s untapped bizav potential into perspective.

Thanks to the foresight and planning of the management at Geneva Airport, it has grown to be a business jet hub, accommodating 33,945 bizav movements a year. The knock-on effects are dramatic: business aviation sector

provides 1,226 high-skilled jobs in the region around Geneva, which yield a further 4,752 jobs along the value chain.

How to take inspiration from this Swiss success story? First look at the root of Ben Gurion’s bizav problem, which appears to be an unproductive relationship between

operators and authorities. Operators say that airport authorities misunderstand and disregard business aviation, although, as of yet, they have done little to explain their sector’s specific requirements. There are numerous working groups at the airport, including one on efficiency; and business aviation needs to have seat at the table.



To coordinate this, participants agreed to start an Israeli Business Aviation Association, a development that was welcomed by Libby Bahat of the Israeli CAA who said it would be useful to have one point of contact for the sector. Aside from airport access, other issues to focus on include having Israeli pilot licences validated through EASA, achieving a better understanding of temporary importation rules for aircraft into Europe, and lobbying to open up flights via Saudi airspace.

The next steps? Formally establish the IBAA, create a report demonstrating business aviation's value to Israel's economy, and get in front of the airport authority, the CAA and the relevant politicians to tell the story about how a small but growing sector can link Israel with the rest of the world.

This report is based on a meeting of 20 representatives from Israeli business aviation including operators, suppliers, and the Israel Civil Aviation Authority.

Date: 27/03/2019

Location: LABS Tel Aviv

Action Item: Formally establish the Israeli Business Aviation Association (IBAA), create a report demonstrating business aviation's value to Israel's economy, and get in front of the airport authority, the CAA and the relevant politicians to explain and promote business aviation.