

Iraqi aviation

up teams of foreign experts to run Iraqi ministries and government agencies. As such, the CPA is responsible for all of Iraq's aviation infrastructure, its aviation administration and its state-owned airline.

Civil aviation in Iraq is now being overseen by Frank Hatfield, the US Federal Aviation Administration's eastern region air traffic manager. Hatfield is dubbed "senior advisor for civil aviation to the Iraqi ministry of transport". Iraq's memberships of the International Civil Aviation Organisation and International Air Transport Association are in limbo, however, until a functioning government in Baghdad is re-established.

Fortunately both Baghdad and Basra airports were secured by US and UK troops and were therefore not totally stripped by

A similar programme was contracted for Basra, including renewing the power supply, heating, air conditioning, sewage and constructing a new runway. At both airports satellite terminals and radio communications are being installed. Project manager Bechtel is under contract to finish the work by the end of the year

Facilities manager

In May, the CPA contracted airport facilities management company Skylink Air and Logistic Support to assess and manage the running of civil aviation at five airports in Iraq. Under the \$2.5 million contract, SkyLink and its partner Serco will also look at opening Mosul and two other airports for civilian use.

These initial efforts are considered only

work at the airport have offered their services to its new "managers" although they have had little if any internationally recognised training for more than 12 years, according to the officers.

"People who worked here were not properly trained," says Grp Capt Tony Gunby, RAF commander of Basra airport. "There will be a huge bill to bring them back on line [to international standards]."

Iraqis are slowly being brought back to work at their country's airports, with Basra's meteorological staff working alongside RAF personnel. According to UK officers a major emerging problem is that Iraq has missed the information technology revolution, with most aviation industry personnel requiring crash courses in IT to make them computer literate.

US and UK military commanders, however, say they want to manage this process carefully to ensure any local staff are properly security screened to prevent sabotage attacks against airport facilities

In the early summer, CPA aviation chiefs asked commercial airlines to submit applications to open fee-paying passenger services to Baghdad. In June, the US Department of Transportation granted Kalitta Air, Northwest Airlines and World Airways permission to fly to Baghdad. American Airlines, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines have authority to serve Iraq. KLM was also keen to fly to the capital. British Airways looked at the possibility of serving Basra, where there are 10,000 UK troops and hundreds of aid workers. Back then, airlines thought they would be able to do good business serving international military contingents, support workers helping the reconstruction efforts and transporting some of the five million exiled Iraqis wishing to return home.



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looters. However, several of Iraqi Airways' 23 aircraft – including Boeing 727s, 747-200Cs, a 747SP and an Ilyushin Il-76, along with some ground handling equipment – were looted before military control was firmly established.

To get Iraq's airport open the CPA was able to draw on \$150 million allocated to the Ministry of Transport to fund emergency repair work. As part of its multi-billion deal to repair Iraq's infrastructure, the US construction giant Bechtel was contracted, via the US Agency for International Development, to begin emergency projects at both Baghdad and Basra airports.

The work at Baghdad airport included installing an emergency power generation system, refurbishment of Terminal C, restoring sewage and water supplies, installing security check points, passenger handling facilities, air conditioning and refurbishment of the air traffic control tower and fire station.

**Royal
Australian Air
Force air
traffic
controllers
manage
airspace at
Baghdad
International**

the first stage of the rehabilitation of Iraq's civil aviation industry. US Congress is assessing George Bush's request for \$87 billion for Iraqi restoration during 2004, which includes \$835 for transport projects, including rebuilding three airports. If the supplemental budget is passed, far more significant work can be expected to get under way next year. The CPA announced in September that it was opening all Iraqi state-owned assets for foreign investment, but the US-led organisation has yet to announce a detailed plan for the future of Iraqi Airways.

While the war and 12 years of sanctions have taken their toll on Iraq's aviation infrastructure, the human resources of the country's aviation industry have also been severely depleted.

UK RAF officers who have been running Basra airport since last April tell *Flight International* that a major effort needs to be put into training Iraqis to international standards. Hundreds of Iraqis who used to

Hindered progress

This enthusiasm soon waned over the summer months as attacks on US and UK troops increased. Commercial operators got cold feet after US C-130s operating out of Baghdad airport were fired at by guerilla fighters armed with shoulder-launched man-portable surface-to-air missiles and the US military issued security warnings. Plans to open commercial services to Baghdad and Basra were put on indefinite hold.

One consolation was the opening of the upper airspace over Iraq for transit traffic early last month. A resurgence of economic activity in Iraq will undoubtedly lead to a surge in demand for air travel to the country, particularly if the oil industry returns to its former strength.

With construction efforts at Iraq's airport gathering pace, the future of civil aviation in Iraq is totally dependent on improving the security situation. ■