



2015 – the end of general aviation in Israel?

By **Arie Egozi** on 4 December, 2013 in Uncategorized

The only hope for general aviation in Israel is that many of the Israeli government's current proposals stay on paper. If not, then in April 2015 all 200 general aviation aircraft will be grounded and a number of maintenance shops will be shut. Sounds unbelievable? The way these things are being handled by the government is unbelievable.

This weird situation has been created by the hunger of real estate sharks for land in central Israel and the impotence of the ministry of transportation. The process has been long and twisted, but its end could actually mean the end of general aviation in the country.

Two decisions have been made – to close Sde Dov, the city airport for Tel Aviv, and also Herzelia airport, some 10 miles to the northeast.

Sde Dov serves small aircraft and helicopters of the Israeli air force (IAF), as well as flights for two airlines, Arkia and Israir, to the Red sea resorts of Eilat. After the airport closes these flights will leave from Ben-Gurion International airport.

Sde Dov is located in one of Israel's most lucrative real estate locations – right in the centre of the country. The pressure to redevelop the site into apartments has been building for years. When Herzelia – where most of the general aviation is located – closes, some of the grounds will also be used for new buildings. Herzelia is also the centre of maintenance operations for general aviation. The government's decision to shut down Herzelia airport includes a proposal to move general aviation from Herzelia to an alternative location – Ein Shemer, further northeast. But this is not realistic. As I have written here before, this alternative is not worth the paper it is typed on. This is because one of the IAF's Arrow ballistic missiles interceptor batteries is based in the location – together with other defence-related operations.

Politicians and officials often make decisions based on fantasies. At this point the ministry of transportation is continuing to repeat the same thing in response to my queries: that the decision has been made and an alternative will be found.

Parrots in a zoo are repeating sentences with more meaning than these official spokespersons. So if this government decision is exceptional – in that it is actually carried out – it will mean that general aviation in Israel will become history in April 2015.

How stupid can a ministry be? Officials who are supposed to take care of general aviation, among other things, are preferring to wait until the last moment and will then find a bad solution. And all this is happening while there are signs that Israel's general aviation facilities are attracting foreign customers. Only yesterday Chim-nir, one of the aviation businesses operating from Herzelia airport, announced that it has received a contract to maintain the Air Tractor 802 fire fighting aircraft of the Cyprus forests authority. Chim-nir has begun marketing its maintenance services in the world, and this is its first contract.

What happens in 2015 ? - **See more at:** <http://www.flightglobal.com/blogs/ariel-view/2013/12/2015-end-general-aviation-israel/#sthash.F6dV0loY.dpuf>