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ZAMBIA AIR FORCE EXPO & MARATHON 2026: A Landmark Celebration of Aviation, Innovation, and National Unity

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The Zambia Air Force (ZAF) Expo and Marathon 2026 marked a significant milestone in Zambia's aviation and defense calendar, debuting as a large-scale national event that successfully brought together the Airforce, private sector, and members of the public. Hosted in Ndola at Peter Zuze Air Force Base, the expo was held from 6th to 7th March 2026, in line with celebrations marking the Zambia Air Force's 61st anniversary.

What made the event particularly significant was not only its scale, but its vision. The expo moved beyond a traditional military display and evolved into a platform for innovation, community engagement, and economic collaboration. It reflected a

modern approach to defense institutions, one that embraces openness, public interaction, and cross-sector partnerships. Ahead of the Expo, the Commander of the Zambia Air Force Lt Gen Oscar Msitu Nyoni, convened a Breakfast Meeting with Captains of Industry on 18th February 2026 at Kitwe Garden Court.

The session brought together private sector leaders, including the presidents of the Chambers of Commerce and corporate executives from diverse industries. More than networking, it was a strategic forum to align expectations, mobilise support, and open doors for exhibition, sponsorship, and supply partnerships. This groundwork proved decisive: the strong corporate presence at the Expo was a direct outcome of

early engagement. In essence, the meeting signalled the Air Force's evolving role not only as a defender of the skies, but as a convener of national development and a catalyst for collective progress.

The ZAF Expo 2026 was designed to bridge the gap between the defense sector and civilian society while showcasing Zambia's aviation capabilities and development potential. On the first day of the expo, over 150 exhibitors participated, representing sectors such as mining, agriculture, technology, manufacturing, construction, and finance. This wide participation highlighted the growing connection between national security and economic development. Defence institutions like the Zambia Air Force are

increasingly recognized not only for security provision but also as contributors to national development. By opening the platform to private companies, government agencies, and innovators, the expo created space for collaboration and idea exchange. For exhibitors, the event offered visibility, networking opportunities, and access to stakeholders across sectors. It also reinforced the role of defense-linked platforms in supporting innovation, investment, and long-term development goals.

A key highlight of the expo was the Zambia Air Force's demonstration of operational strength and technical capability. The displays reflected precision, discipline, and professionalism. Aerobatic performances captivated audiences as aircraft executed coordinated maneuvers across the sky, demonstrating pilot skills and aircraft performance. Paratrooper jumps further demonstrated operational precision and special forces capability. Interactive exhibition stands allowed visitors to engage directly with Air Force personnel, gaining insights into aviation systems, flight operations, aircraft maintenance, and organizational structure. For many young attendees, this created inspiration and awareness of aviation career pathways.

Held on the second day of the expo, the (ZAF) Marathon added a dimension of participation

and inclusion to the event. It attracted professional athletes, civilians, and members of the security forces. The event featured three categories, a 21-kilometre half marathon, a 10-kilometre race, and a 5-kilometre fun run, ensuring participation across different fitness levels. Beyond competition, the marathon symbolised endurance, discipline, and unity, values closely associated with military service and national identity. The participation of civilians alongside military personnel reinforced a strong sense of shared purpose and national cohesion. The marathon also encouraged healthy lifestyles and community engagement, making it both a sporting event and a national unifying activity.

Beyond exhibitions and sporting activities, the ZAF Expo and Marathon maintained a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere that made it a family-friendly national experience. Live musical performances created a lively environment and showcased local artistic talent. Entertainment was integrated throughout the venue, ensuring continuous engagement for visitors. Children's play areas provided safe and interactive spaces for younger attendees, allowing families to enjoy the event comfortably. Innovative displays and educational exhibits further enriched the experience, combining learning with entertainment. This blend of activities transformed the expo into a national gathering that extended beyond a formal

military exhibition into a shared educational, social and recreational experience.

At the heart of the ZAF Expo and Marathon was fundraising, with a strong focus on supporting community development initiatives. The event demonstrated the Zambia Air Force's commitment to uplifting vulnerable groups, making social impact a central outcome rather than a secondary feature.

This effort was reinforced by significant private sector participation. Diamond Sponsors, Mopani Copper Mines and Access Bank Zambia Limited, each contributed K500,000, while Corporate Sponsors such as Greengold Estate, Hollard Life Zambia and Sanlam Life Insurance Zambia Limited provided additional substantial support. Their involvement reflected a shared commitment to driving meaningful change. Funds raised, targeted at approximately K6 million were directed toward the rehabilitation of Mitanda Home for the Aged and the provision of desks for the Lions School for Children with Disabilities in Ndola, enhancing both care and learning environments.

These contributions highlighted the Zambia Air Force's broader role in national development, extending beyond defence into active social responsibility, while reinforcing the value of collective action in nation-building.