

Interview with Steve Bentley, FRAeS - Defining Sofema's Strategic Vision for MRO Middle East 2026

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SOFIA, BULGARIA, December 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Steve Bentley explains that a physical presence in Dubai is essential for any organisation positioning itself as an international provider of aviation regulatory training and support. He notes that while European and North American markets are relatively mature, the Middle East continues to experience sustained infrastructure and fleet growth.

According to Bentley, MRO Middle East is not simply a trade exhibition but a central meeting point for the region's aviation stakeholders, allowing [Sofema](#) to engage directly with organisations operating in a rapidly expanding market.

Bentley states that although digital platforms are efficient for knowledge delivery, trust and long-term cooperation are often established through direct personal interaction. He highlights that business relationships in the region rely heavily on in-person dialogue, particularly when discussing regulatory challenges with maintenance organisations and CAMOs. The booth presence is intended to demonstrate availability, flexibility, and a clear understanding of regional operational needs.

According to Bentley, the concept reflects Sofema's approach to applying EASA regulatory frameworks while adapting them to local authority requirements, such as those of the UAE GCAA or Saudi Arabia's GACA. Rather than offering standardised training without regional context, Sofema focuses on aligning international best practices with national compliance frameworks, supporting operators in meeting both sets of expectations.

Bentley explains that many aviation professionals in the region already have substantial EASA



SOFEMA ONLINE
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Exclusive Interview:
Defining Sofema's Strategic Vision for MRO Middle East 2026

Steve Bentley
CEO of Sofema
With 50+ years of experience in the aviation industry

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experience but require additional knowledge to operate under UAE regulations. He notes that retraining from the beginning is inefficient and unnecessary. Bridging Courses are designed to address regulatory differences directly, allowing organisations to achieve compliance more quickly while making effective use of existing competencies.

Bentley points out that Vision 2030 has significantly increased demand for trained national aviation personnel. He emphasises that reliance solely on classroom-based training would not meet the scale or pace required. Sofema's online training platforms are positioned to support large-scale vocational development, enabling broader access to regulatory training for the growing Saudi aviation workforce.

Bentley refers to the [Corporate Freedom Pass \(CFP\)](#) as a structured approach for organisations with multiple staff members. He explains that the subscription-based model replaces individual course purchases, providing predictable training costs and scalability. For management teams, the CFP is presented as a method to maintain competence across the workforce without repeated procurement cycles.

Bentley describes the PTP program as a framework for long-term cooperation. Participating organisations receive structured benefits such as discounted access and prioritised support in return for ongoing engagement. The program aims to move relationships beyond occasional training purchases toward planned, sustained compliance support.

Bentley clarifies that online and instructor-led training serve different but complementary purposes. While online courses are effective for regulatory knowledge and updates, instructor-led sessions remain important for complex subjects such as auditing, organisational performance, and compliance management. Sofema continues to offer both formats to address varying training requirements.

Bentley states that Sofema supports organisations seeking EASA approvals, including Part 145, Part 147, Part 21G, and Part 21J, as well as those preparing for regulatory audits or new approval submissions. Consultancy services focus on identifying compliance gaps, strengthening internal systems, and improving audit readiness before regulatory assessments take place.

Bentley notes that aviation workforces in the region are often distributed across multiple countries. Online training enables consistent competency development without interrupting operations or requiring travel. The platform supports continuous learning aligned with the operational tempo of modern MROs.

According to Bentley, Dubai serves as a regional gateway with strong influence across Africa and South Asia. Establishing a solid presence in the Gulf supports Sofema's expansion into neighbouring markets where regulatory frameworks and operational models are closely linked to those of the region.

Bentley concludes that workforce competence is a foundational element of safety and regulatory compliance.

He emphasises that Sofema's role extends beyond delivering individual courses, focusing instead on supporting organisations in building structured, sustainable compliance and training systems tailored to their operational realities.

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