



EUROPEAN ROTORS

THE VTOL
SHOW AND
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Business Report
December 2020
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EUROPEAN ROTORS Business Report

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Glenn Sands, Managing Editor

Back to business

Welcome to the EUROPEAN ROTORS Business Report, which has been produced in conjunction with the team at RotorHub to give readers a taste of what's been taking place around the European rotorcraft community in recent months.

The EUROPEAN ROTORS VTOL show and safety conference planned for 2020 was intended to celebrate the use of helicopters in both the commercial and parapublic sectors, bringing together operators, manufacturers, MROs and the myriad of companies that support the industry. RotorHub would have been there to report on the latest industry developments both in print and online.

But the pandemic scuppered our plans for the show, although just for this year. Work is already well under way on what will now be the inaugural event, which is due to be held at the Koelnmesse exhibition centre in Cologne between 16 and 18 November 2021.

When we look back at 2020, we realise that it was a year like no other. It was one of the few times when the entire world acted as one, to try and stop the global pandemic that has ravaged the planet.

All over the world, the media showed many hours of footage of doctors and nurses struggling to manage overflowing wards and giving their best to save every human life. But there were also the 'quiet heroes' hovering in the background, never seeking or receiving attention.

These were the helicopter air and medical crews who quickly adapted and found new ways of operating to support the fight against COVID-19. Every HEMS operator, no matter what cityscape they were flying over, met the call and responded with dedication and compassion to aid those who needed help the most. This highlighted medical helicopter operations that routinely occur 24/7 around the world with little fanfare, but that provide life-saving care.

Away from the blue flashing lights and hospital emergency rooms, new helicopter models are on the verge of entering the corporate and VIP world. They're bringing high-end technology and ease of handling that was never thought possible five years ago.

Bell's 525 Relentless is the first commercial helicopter to be equipped with fly-by-wire, while Airbus Helicopters' H160 has created interest due to its impressive performance statistics and ultra-cool looks.

The European helicopter sector has much to look forward to in 2021, with many operators seeking to upgrade their fleet and expand their operations.

The last 12 months have hit the commercial helicopter industry hard, but operators have overcome the challenges to support the greater cause. This indicates not only how adaptable the operators can be, but also the sheer versatility that the helicopter offers in every aspect of aviation. ■

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Cover: Essex & Herts Air Ambulance's Leonardo AW169 in the skies over London. (Photo: Leonardo)



THE BEATING HEARTS OF EUROPE

It has been a turbulent time for helicopter manufacturers and operators across Europe. Many have had to adjust their procedures and practices to cope with the changes. But demand remains high, and those involved in the helicopter business are rising to the challenge, as Michael Doran reports.

With travel all but halted, manufacturing shuttered and many businesses in financial chaos, the European helicopter market has become as treacherous to navigate as the wild and rugged environments in which rotary-wing aircraft thrive.

Forecasts made at the start of 2020 have been rendered largely meaningless by the year's events. A more recent indicator

of the market's health is Airbus's 2020 half-year report. With 54% of global deliveries in the civil and parapublic market, Airbus is the dominant OEM. Its total deliveries for 2019 were more than double those of its closest rival, Leonardo.

Airbus received orders for 369 helicopters and delivered 332 in 2019, but compared to the first half of 2019, orders in 2020 have tumbled by 39% and deliveries by 27%. It's highly likely that the other OEMs are dealing with similar situations, although they have all had their successes in recent months. This article looks at what they have been doing since March and how they are positioning for the future.

Major milestone

For Airbus, a highlight of 2020 has been EASA certification of the new twin-engined H160, a process encompassing 1,500 flight hours, three prototypes, two pre-production aircraft, 500 people and 1,200 certification documents. The H160 sits between the H145 and H175 models, and can be configured for a wide range of roles, including emergency medical services,

offshore and parapublic missions, as well as private and business aviation.

Within days of certification, Airbus Corporate Helicopters confirmed an order from an Italian operator for an ACH160 for use on private and corporate flights. The operator joined customers from seven other countries that had already placed orders for the ACH160.

In October, major lessor Milestone Aviation added six H160s to its order book, with deliveries scheduled to commence in 2023. Milestone's CEO, Pat Sheedy, believes that the versatility of the H160 will make it a valuable addition to the company's fleet. The lessor has already been in discussions with operators with a view to placing the aircraft into service as soon as they become available.

One of the breakthrough features of the H160 is the world-first ground helipad assisted take-off, which brings automation to this procedure, allowing the pilot to focus more on obstacle clearance. The feature also kicks in for an extreme case like the loss of an engine before reaching the decision point, with the automation



The H160 was certified by EASA in 2020, and the new type continues to make steady progress on the sales front. (Photo: Airbus)



Leonardo's AW109 family has had plenty of success in the European HEMS market. (Photo: Leonardo)

managing everything to return the helicopter safely to the helipad.

Another first came in June, when Norwegian operator Helitrans took delivery of two H125s using a COVID-19-compliant e-delivery process. This allowed all the requirements of the normal delivery operation to be met without the need for physical meetings or travel, with Helitrans accepting the flight-test and inspection findings of Airbus staff.

Customer acceptance tests, video inspection of the aircraft, documentation verification and disinfection procedures were all carried out prior to delivery. An online video conference was held to review all of the relevant information before the formal transfer of title took place. To end the process, the helicopters were transported by road to Helitrans in Trondheim.

Distance learning

In another move designed to cut travel and in-person contact, Airbus is now making a greater number of its training courses available online, including type rating, recurrent training and familiarisation

courses. The remote training is focused on non-qualifying refresher courses and the theoretical portion of qualifying courses.

Innovation continued in September when Airbus delivered the first five-bladed H145 to Norwegian Air Ambulance, which operates 13 HEMS bases in Norway and four in Denmark with an existing fleet of H135 and H145 helicopters.

EASA certification for this new version of the H145 was received in June. The shift to five blades has increased the useful load of the aircraft by 150 kg, while the bearingless design eases maintenance and helps improve ride comfort.

In September, HTM Helicopters of Germany became the first customer to order the five-bladed model for operations in the offshore wind sector. Two new H145s will be used for passenger transportation to and from wind farms, and for hoisting technicians to the wind turbines. For the role, the helicopters will be fitted with a powerful hoist, flotation equipment and a cargo hook.

A bright spot amid the COVID-19 clouds for Leonardo came in June with the

announcement that France's SAF Helicopteres would be supporting EMS operations from Rouen Hospital in Normandy with a new AW109 Trekker light-twin helicopter. The aircraft was due to be delivered by the end of 2020.

This is a significant step forward for Leonardo, as it marks the entrance of this model into the French civil helicopter market, and builds on the success of the AW109 Power and Grand in the EMS sector in France.

Rapid response

Leonardo says the AW109 Trekker is the fastest light twin for rescue intervention and the only one to feature a cabin that allows full patient body access from head to toe in EMS operations. It can be configured to suit customer needs for one or two pilots on VFR/IFR missions, and more than 70 have already been sold globally for roles as diverse as EMS, SAR, law enforcement, offshore and VIP transport.

SAF's CEO, Tristan Serretta, is looking forward to supplying emergency services to Rouen Hospital, and points out that the ▶



Kopter reports that flight testing of the SH09 is progressing well. (Photo: Kopter)



LIFE AT THE TOP

Even the exclusive world of private helicopters is not immune from the pandemic, as Charlotte Pedersen (left), CEO of VIP charter and helicopter management specialist Luxaviation Helicopters, confirms. “In general, the whole helicopter business has been hit by this

crisis, including the charters, because there are no people travelling,” she observes.

Pedersen points out that operators in sectors such as EMS, construction and heavy lifting are usually paid a fixed base payment which is then supplemented for every hour the aircraft is flown. However, all the restrictions in place have limited operations and reduced incomes right throughout the industry, except for firefighting operators.

In the private market, demand is still there and cost is not the issue, but with borders closed and movement restricted, both passengers and crews are simply not able to travel. In common with commercial airlines, Luxaviation sees the lack of common border and quarantine regulations as a major issue that needs to be fixed before travel can take off.

“Maybe some companies will reconsider the amount of travel needed now they have got used to Zoom meetings, but the ones that have to travel will definitely go back to travelling, and I think there will be the demand for private aviation,” Pedersen says. “We are not necessarily limited by the number of clients who are interested, as we are also limited by the time it takes manufacturers to develop and build new helicopters.”

Luxaviation helps clients to select and purchase helicopters, and when a high-net-worth individual wants a VIP aircraft, a wait time of close to two years stretches the patience, particularly in this time when OEMs are struggling for commercial orders.

“One trend I am starting to see is that people who want to buy a helicopter are going for high quality, not necessarily the cheapest option,” she says. “So we see a demand for twin-engine types, and they want instrument-rated pilots flying them, and in my opinion this is very positive.”

Pedersen believes that there will be continued growth in demand for helicopters and that the spark for this is economic growth, particularly in developing countries and regions.

“We operate on a global basis, and while it’s been very challenging since February and March, we have actually added employees throughout this period, and that shows a little bit about the demand we have had,” Pedersen concludes.

AW109 Trekker will deliver a high-end and economically viable solution.

“The region will benefit from our solid expertise and experience in HEMS, combined with the exceptional capabilities in terms of EMS interior, performance, advanced avionics and safety standards of the Trekker,” he says.

In a similar approach to Airbus, Leonardo has developed a Smart Delivery option, an online digital process formulated to keep staff and customers healthy while facilitating the acceptance of aircraft. This gives customers the ability to follow the process as it unfolds at the Leonardo facility, and enables them to be part of all the acceptance phases, including ground inspection, flight testing, completion of interiors and painting, right through to the final checks and documentation review.

Leonardo says the Smart Delivery procedure is being implemented at its production facilities in Italy, Poland, the US and the UK.

With an eye to the future, Leonardo completed the purchase of Swiss company Kopter, the developer of the light single-engined SH09, in April 2020. Following a short COVID-related break around the same time, flight testing with the third SH09 prototype is back under way.

Recent testing activity in Mollis, Switzerland, has largely focused on the new tail rotor and aerodynamic modifications for improved handling in the low-speed envelope. Flights at altitude have evaluated the handling characteristics at higher speeds and in autorotation.

During this activity, Kopter achieved several firsts for the SH09, including the first flight at the prototype’s maximum permissible take-off weight.

Regional support

Whilst flying and sales activity has been quiet during the pandemic, Bell moved decisively in the second half of 2020 to strengthen its European service capability by adding three authorised maintenance centres (AMCs) to its global network.

In September, it announced its first European AMC, located near Warsaw, Poland. Aero Club, a long-standing Part 145 maintenance organisation, now offers approved MRO services for the Bell 505 and 407 helicopters.

“This new Polish AMC provides Bell operators with a sense of security that they can have maintenance or work performed on their aircraft that has been vetted and approved by Bell,” says Duncan Van De Velde, the OEM’s managing director for Europe. “This added support is in addition to the services Bell’s Prague service centre offers for heavier maintenance needs.”

Within a day, Bell had announced a second European AMC, in Billund, Denmark. Maintenance for 206A, 206B, 206L and 505 helicopters is being provided by Air Service International, a Part 145 facility established in 1979.

In October, Bell continued the expansion by announcing that it was adding German MRO Intercopter, located near Munich, to provide services on 206s and 407s.

Dependable performer

In a testament to the reliability of the Bell 505 Jet Ranger X, in 2020 Italy’s Elicompany joined the list of global top-10 high-time 505 operators, having clocked up



Operators have been impressed by the versatility and reliability of the Bell 505 Jet Ranger X. (Photo: Bell)

1,000 flight hours in just 10 months. Elicompany has a large fleet of Bell 505, 427, 407 and 206 helicopters that it uses for passenger transfers, sightseeing flights and aerial work, including pipeline and powerline inspections for oil and electric companies.

Unsurprisingly, the company’s co-owner and flight operations director, Cristian

Forghieri, is a devotee of Bell technology and reports that the 505 has proven to be exceptionally reliable for its missions.

“As a pilot flying with four people, equipment and a full fuel tank in the 505, it’s remarkable to see how much power the aircraft provides to hover over worksites,” he says. “It is quick with a light design, making it the best aircraft for our missions.” ■



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A reduction in the financial and administrative burden caused by the current regulatory environment would aid the recovery of helicopter operators, says EHA chairman Peter Moeller. (Photo: EHA)

Striving for normality

Peter Moeller, chairman of the European Helicopter Association, discusses the challenges facing Europe's rotorcraft industry and its prospects for the future with Emma Kelly.



The European helicopter industry has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, just like every other sector of the aviation industry. There are glimmers of optimism, however, with the European Helicopter Association (EHA) hoping that, by working together, the industry will be able to return to some degree of normality and sustained growth.

“The COVID-19 pandemic had and continues to have a tremendous impact on the field of aviation, the helicopter sector included,” acknowledges Peter Moeller, the chairman of EHA, which represents more than 500 members spread across 11 European countries, including helicopter operators, manufacturers, service providers and suppliers.

“Especially during the lockdown phase in the first and, partially, the second quarter of this year, helicopter operations like passenger transport did not take place at all. Even the offshore transportation industry experienced a severe cut in flights. Operations across European borders were very much restricted,” observes Moeller, who notes that the training sector also came to a halt due to protective restrictions.

The versatility of helicopters, however, came to the fore during the coronavirus pandemic, with some sectors of the industry proving invaluable, conducting important missions for the sake of society, Moeller emphasises.

He points, for example, to helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS)

operations which continued and were tasked with the additional role of transporting COVID-19 patients throughout countries in Europe to hospitals with available intensive care facilities as infection numbers spiked. European civil helicopter operators were also responsible for carrying vital medical and protective equipment and specialist medical personnel to where they were needed most.

Furthermore, aerial firefighting, vital infrastructure missions including pipeline and powerline inspections, sling-load work and police helicopter operations all continued during the pandemic, albeit with protective measures in place, Moeller notes.

While the HEMS sector saw its activities increasing, passenger transport and

“ What we have recently seen is that working together, sharing experience and capacities, massively helps in taking the reins of this pandemic. ”

training organisations were hit extremely hard by the pandemic. Business transportation, which is seen as a faster and safer way to travel, has bounced back well, says Moeller.

The European helicopter sector has a vital role to play as the continent strives to recover, not only from a health perspective, but also in terms of getting economies back on track.

“Helicopter operations such as HEMS will be continuously important in saving human lives. For instance, when hospitals are on the verge of full capacity dealing with COVID patients, helicopters are often the sole way to transport those patients to other treatment centres,” says Moeller.

“The pandemic has slowed down public activities like construction work in remote areas where helicopters play a vital role. These activities will restart again,” he adds.

Training organisations are also beginning to ramp up to train the next generation of helicopter pilots, with the demand for private pilot licences growing as individual transportation becomes more attractive post-pandemic. In addition, rotorcraft will continue to play a role in agriculture and environmental management, with Moeller pointing as an example to European forests that have suffered from acidification of the soil, with helicopters used to drop lime to reverse the process and protect ecosystems.

The pandemic could also speed up developments in some areas of the rotorcraft industry, Moeller suggests, such as the use of unmanned aerial vehicles in the logistics sector.

As we continue to live through the pandemic, with virulent second waves in



European HEMS operators have played a key role in the continent's response to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. (Photo: ANWB)

several European countries, it is hard to predict the long-term impact on the industry.

“It is, from my point of view, far too early to have a clear view on what will happen in the long term,” acknowledges Moeller. What is clear, however, is the importance of collaboration throughout the industry going forward.

“What we have recently seen is that working together, sharing experience and capacities, massively helps in taking the reins of this pandemic. And history has proven that after each fundamental crisis, economies and society come back stronger,” he asserts.

Overburdened operators

Moeller emphasises that governments can help the helicopter sector in its recovery by supporting long-term public-financed building projects and maintaining infrastructure, for example, which would provide aerial support work for operators. The recovery could be helped further by reducing the financial and administrative burden caused by “regulatory overkill”, which is a particular threat to small operators with fewer than five helicopters, he observes.

In this area, Moeller points to a research project recently initiated by the European

Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) aimed at reducing the administrative burden and costs for small operators so that they can focus on safety-related investments. EASA is identifying the rules and provisions which impose such a burden and assessing their impact with a view to simplifying the regulatory framework. EHA is supporting this initiative, says Moeller.

EHA is focused on playing its part in helping the sector to recover and return to normality, or whatever the new normal is, as soon as possible. Since its formation in 1980, EHA's mission has been to speak as the voice of the European rotorcraft industry at European institutions, advancing the interests of the sector and promoting the use of helicopters as a vital tool for Europe's citizens and economies.

“EHA and the national helicopter associations are supporting our members on a national level and at a European level to make decision makers on both levels aware of the difficult situation of the helicopter industry on the one hand and the importance of the services delivered by the industry for society on the other hand,” says Moeller. “Together, we strive toward a better economic situation for the European helicopter industry, and toward improved and harmonised regulations.” ▶

The changing economic realities of the oil and gas market have taken their toll on the offshore transportation sector, and the disruption caused by COVID-19 has been another setback.
(Photo: Nicolas Gouhier)



EHA wants to grow its membership to work with a wider cross-section of the industry. Moeller explains: “Now, more than ever, we are looking to increase the number of members we have, to be able to mirror and tackle the diversified European realities and bring on board new and fresh ideas to develop our industry further.” The association is particularly keen to attract East European members to its ranks, with that part of the continent “less represented within the European rotorcraft bubble” than other regions.

Moeller is hoping that EHA’s membership will have grown by the time the first EUROPEAN ROTORS event takes place in Cologne, Germany, from 16 to 18 November 2021. The show, organised by EHA and EASA, was recently postponed for a year due to the ongoing pandemic.

EUROPEAN ROTORS is designed to bring together all sectors of the VTOL industry for networking and discussions to allow the industry to work together to face its challenges. An extensive conference, training and workshop programme is planned for the event, as well as a major trade exhibition. The annual EASA Rotorcraft and VTOL Symposium, an opportunity to discuss current and future challenges with the European regulator, is

due to be part of the schedule. The postponement of EUROPEAN ROTORS meant the 2020 Symposium was held online in December.

The decision to delay the show was taken in early October due to rising COVID-19 cases throughout Europe. “With more than 100 confirmed exhibitors, a unique conference and training programme, and strong support from the industry and the national associations, we felt we were on track for the premiere of EUROPEAN ROTORS, but with many European countries and regions which are key markets for the show becoming risk areas, it is very hard for attendees to travel to Germany due to quarantine and travel regulations,” Moeller explained at the time of the postponement.

“Therefore, and because we feel responsible for the safety and health of our exhibitors and potential visitors, EHA and EASA together with key industry stakeholders share the assessment that the health risks are too high.”

Staying in touch

Following the unavoidable postponement, the event’s organisers have been looking at delivering online content designed to keep the rotorcraft community connected. In the form of panels, presentations and

interviews, this content will “ensure the transfer of knowledge we wanted to achieve and spread at EUROPEAN ROTORS”, says Moeller.

Moeller believes that EHA is the “perfect platform” to bring the industry together to address the issues it faces, and an event such as EUROPEAN ROTORS will further reinforce this.

“By establishing EUROPEAN ROTORS, we create an annual event that brings together all of the different stakeholders of the VTOL world – the manufacturers, the suppliers, the regulator, the politicians, the operators and their experts from the maintenance and operational side – to foster our goals of developing safer, more environmentally friendly and more efficient operations,” he explains.

While online meetings will have to suffice for now to keep the communication going in such difficult times, they will not replace the benefits of face-to-face meetings and networking, says Moeller. “Therefore, the entire VTOL sector is waiting for the first live edition of EUROPEAN ROTORS in 2021.”

He adds: “We would be delighted to see many exhibitors and visitors from all over the world at the first EUROPEAN ROTORS. This would be a sign that we are returning to normality.” ■

Covering all the bases

Peter H Braasch has a long history in the aviation insurance sector, and Dr Frank Liemandt finds out how the German company meets the specific needs of the rotorcraft community.

Tell us a bit about your company.

With more than 40 years of experience, Peter H Braasch are insurance brokers specialising in aviation and aircraft policies. Based in Hamburg, we maintain close links with underwriters around the world in order to provide customers with the most comprehensive overview of the aviation insurance market.

The company is run as a family business, with the third generation in charge, and has a team of more than 20 employees. As we work on an average of 500 claims per year, we have unique expertise and know how to best serve our clients.

What is your stake in the European rotorcraft market?

We support a significant part of the private and commercial helicopter sector across Europe, with our customers undertaking a wide range of different missions, especially in the aerial work sector.

What do you see as your main advantages compared to other players in the market?

We see ourselves not just as pure brokers, but really as service providers to our customers. This means that, firstly, we consult with each client to tailor an insurance package that's right for them.

Secondly, if there is a claim to be managed, we are on hand to deal with it. We can deliver our initial claim analysis within 24 hours and will assign a dedicated team member to work on the case. Being able to react quickly is extremely important as, for quite a few companies, a grounded helicopter can mean significant losses and can even endanger the whole business.

How has the aviation insurance market evolved in recent times?

After a period of significant downward pressure over the previous 12 years, rates



A family business: (left to right) Florian, Andreas and Fabian Braasch. (Photo: Peter H Braasch)

started to rise again in mid-2019. Many insurance companies have withdrawn from the general aviation market, including the helicopter sector. Those that remained have been able to raise prices once more.

COVID-19 has not had a real impact on the costs, but of course has been hurting the daily business of operators.

What makes the helicopter insurance market special?

The helicopter predominantly relies on a main gear, the engine and the rotors. This may sound like a simple fact, but it is an important difference from other aircraft. It means that if one of these components fails, you often lose the whole machine, or at least suffer heavy damage.

And many companies operate very few helicopters. So the whole business model is linked to maybe just one or two machines. This leads to a situation where the assigned risks in the rotorcraft sector are split over several parties. You need a deep understanding of the market and relationships with the different insurance companies to achieve a fair rate here.

Another characteristic of the helicopter is its versatility, which is also reflected in the business models of the operators. Many of them are flight schools, offer passenger transport and are active in aerial support work, using the same machine.

Finally, in Europe, the market for rotorcraft missions is limited, and many of our clients

also operate in other countries. It means that special insurance cover needs to be arranged, often at very short notice.

How do you ensure that your services meet the needs of operators?

First, we acquire as much information as possible about the operator and its business. We then tailor the insurance package to their

exact needs. It is vitally important to consider all of the different risks that could impact the client and potentially affect the fate of their business. As well as liability, hull and accident insurance, we offer additional coverage like engine breakdown and spare parts insurance.

At the end of this process, we present a detailed case to potential insurance underwriters in order to achieve the best possible rates.

In the event of an accident, immediate answers and solutions need to be found, so our clients can reach us almost around the clock. We know surveyors and repair shops, and have respected legal experts on hand. This ensures a quick and smooth process to get the customer back in the air as soon as possible.

How do you expect the new EUROPEAN ROTORS show to benefit the industry?

We see EUROPEAN ROTORS becoming the leading platform for the helicopter industry and the whole community in Europe.

The new format of an exhibition combined with a unique conference and educational programme will attract the widest range of visitors from across the sector. We are looking forward to meeting with them and informing them about the latest developments in the market, while also acquiring information about any changes in the regulations for our business.

This is all in line with our motto: "You rotate – we protect". ■

Coptersafety installs new AW169 simulator



Coptersafety's AW169 FFS should be in service in March 2021. (Photo: Coptersafety)

Helicopter pilot training provider Coptersafety has installed a new AW169 full-flight simulator (FFS) at its facility in Helsinki, Finland. The company expects the Level D FFS to be ready for training by March 2021, following the completion of testing and certification.

The installation work has been carried out in conjunction with experts from TRU Simulation + Training and Rockwell Collins.

Kim Rognli, the AW169 lead instructor at Coptersafety, explained: "We started the simulator construction project at the beginning of summer 2020. Now, despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we have managed to move on to the flight test stage, which is currently being completed.

"At this point, I can say it looks very promising. If everything goes to plan, we are expecting the simulator to be ready for

evaluation by Traficom, the Finnish civil aviation authority, in February 2021."

Despite it being a relatively new helicopter, the AW169 is already in service with a significant number of operators. Simulator training for the type is lagging behind, however, with only one simulator currently available worldwide.

Mikko Kallio, the head of training at Coptersafety, commented: "With a new AW169 Level D full-flight simulator, Coptersafety can extend its offer of type-specific and operational training to yet another multi-engine helicopter type. We are already known for the quality of our training services, and we aim to achieve the same level of professionalism and excellence for the AW169."

Kallio continued: "Our mission at Coptersafety is to improve the safety of helicopter operations, and with this new simulator, we will be able to better support AW169 operators to prepare their pilots for their challenging missions."

Bell and ESG collaborate on 429 demonstrator

Bell has announced a collaboration agreement with Elektroniksystem- und Logistik-GmbH (ESG) that will see the installation of the German company's Mission Management System on a Bell 429, which will serve as a law enforcement demonstrator.

The demonstrator will be used to showcase the aircraft's capabilities to police and military operators in Europe and around the world. New customers for the 429 will have the option of purchasing the ESG system directly from Bell as part of their mission equipment package.

"With the Bell 429 certified to the latest certification standards in its class, combined with market-leading customer support, it was imperative to team up with a top technology company such as ESG," commented Duncan Van De Velde, Bell's managing director, Europe and Russia. "Bell and ESG are committed to providing the best solution to the



Bell's 429 law enforcement demonstrator will be equipped with ESG's Mission Management System. (Image: Bell)

parapublic market and will work together to showcase this offering."

"We are excited about this collaboration with Bell," said Daniel Högemann, project manager mission equipment, ESG. "By pairing our Mission Management System with the reliable Bell 429, we believe we can provide a perfect parapublic solution to the region."

For police and military operations, the surveillance system is a critical item of equipment. To conduct their missions,

operators must have confidence that the system can perform in an emergency. According to the two companies, "ESG's Mission Management System has set the standard for police surveillance missions by providing state-of-the-art integration of mission equipment".

With over 400 Bell 429s around the globe, and 100 operating in Europe, the helicopter has been one of the most successful light twin-engine types in the market since its certification in 2009.

Volocopter plans air taxi launch in Singapore

Volocopter wants air taxis in Singapore within three years.
(Image: Volocopter)



German urban air mobility pioneer Volocopter has revealed that it intends to launch an air taxi service in Singapore, following two years of close collaboration with the city. Working together with the Economic Development Board of Singapore (EDB) and the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS), Volocopter plans to make air taxi services a reality in the Southeast Asian city-state within the next three years.

In October 2019, Volocopter completed an air taxi demonstration flight in the heart

of Singapore over the Marina Bay area, giving observers the opportunity to view what urban air mobility will look like. Before launching services, Volocopter will need to obtain the necessary regulatory approvals, including those from CAAS and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency.

“Singapore is renowned for its leading role in adapting and living new technologies. Our successful cooperation with EDB, the Ministry of Transport and CAAS on our previous flight has shown that there is no better place in Asia to launch our electric air taxi services than in Singapore,” said Florian Reuter, CEO of Volocopter.

“The city’s research institutes conducting R&D have an integral part in this,” he added. “Topics like route validation for autonomous operations, material science and research

regarding battery technology are very important for our long-term success.”

“Urban air mobility is an emerging area within the broader mobility sector, which we have identified as a growth industry for Singapore,” stated Tan Kong Hwee, EDB’s executive vice-president. “Singapore is an important regional testbed for autonomous cars, electric vehicles and urban air mobility, including the successful test flight by Volocopter in 2019.

“We are glad that Volocopter has chosen Singapore to anchor its commercial and R&D activities. This will help build new capabilities for our mobility ecosystem and create many exciting opportunities.”

Tan Kah Han, senior director of CAAS’s Unmanned Systems Group, commented: “In this new area of urban air mobility, we look forward to continuing our work with Volocopter. This gives us the opportunity to co-create regulations and technologies with the industry, facilitating innovation to enable a future mode of transportation for Singapore.”

Thales and StandardAero achieve autopilot success

Thales and StandardAero have announced the successful first flight test of a compact four-axis autopilot system that will bring performance and safety benefits to Airbus AS350 and H125 helicopters.

This milestone is an important step in the process of achieving supplemental type certification for the system. Flight testing will continue during the coming months at StandardAero’s facility in Langley, British Columbia, with the launch of the autopilot expected by mid-2021. Early in 2020, it was announced that WeatherTech, an automotive accessories company, would be the launch customer for the system.

“The launch of this flight test programme is a key milestone for StandardAero and Thales,” confirmed Jean-Paul Ebanga, vice-president of flight avionics activities for Thales. “This product combines Thales’ autopilot experience, based on billions of flight hours accumulated and outstanding

customer satisfaction, with StandardAero’s extensive aftermarket capabilities in aircraft modification and certification. We aim to bring a user-friendly solution offering an unparalleled level of safety and reliability to the light helicopter market.”

The Thales/StandardAero compact autopilot is an intuitive automatic flight control system that increases safety through reduced pilot workload. It provides stability augmentation, attitude retention, and flight director modes such as altitude and heading hold.

“This state-of-the-art, four-axis autopilot system has been designed as a straightforward retrofit and provides pilots with simplified operation that will help reduce wear and tear on the helicopter, while making flying in normal and adverse conditions much easier and safer for the crew and passengers,” explained Elvis Moniz, vice-president of product



WeatherTech will be the launch customer for the new Thales and StandardAero autopilot.
(Photo: StandardAero)

development for StandardAero’s helicopters business unit.

Thales and StandardAero bring complementary expertise to the autopilot collaboration. Thales produces the essential components, including the advanced control management systems, four trim actuators, three intelligent linear actuators and the data concentrator/control panel. StandardAero brings expertise in aircraft modification and certification, which enables it to manage the mechanical and electrical systems integration.

ASU bolsters European support for NVGs

Aviation Specialties Unlimited (ASU), a global leader in night vision solutions, has introduced a new support presence in Europe. Alex Emmel, a highly experienced ASU employee and pilot, will be based in Germany to ensure customers can get local support for night vision goggles, aircraft lighting, training and parts, as well as assistance with navigating the regulatory environment.

As NVG technology advances with higher figure-of-merit and white phosphor options, ASU is looking to provide the highest performing NVGs and assist operators with the documentation for the sale of these International Trade in Arms Regulations (ITAR) items.

In addition, the company is developing a new lightweight NVG product that should significantly reduce aircrew neck strain and fatigue.



ASU celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2020. (Photo: ASU)

Proper aircraft lighting is essential for every safe and compliant NVG programme. In 2020, ASU technicians modified 40 aircraft, and the company has received several new night vision imaging system supplemental type certificates (STCs). It now has over 70 STCs and has completed 1,400 installations. It is in the final stages of gaining an STC approval for the UH-60

Black Hawk. ASU believes this will greatly benefit utility and firefighting operations.

ASU has been helping operators to navigate the regulatory environment for NVG certification and use, while collaborating with the FAA, EASA, Transport Canada and other aviation authorities, for more than 25 years.

“Our brothers and sisters around the world fly every night to risk their lives helping others,” said ASU founder and CEO Mike Atwood. “Some of

them fly in dark terrain and remote places. We must get NVGs to them to reduce unnecessary risks.

“Will there still be accidents? Yes. Will there still be mistakes? Yes. But we can help reduce unnecessary accidents.

“That is why we continue to try and make NVGs available to keep people safe,” Atwood remarked.

Entrol launches Bell 505 flight training device



Entrol's new Bell 505 FTD. (Photo: Entrol)

Spain's Entrol, a leading manufacturer of fixed- and rotary-wing flight training devices (FTDs), has completed the development of a Level 2 FTD for the Bell 505 helicopter.

Horizon International Flight Academy, the Middle East's largest independent helicopter flight training academy, placed an order with the Spanish company for the Bell 505 FTD in November 2019. Horizon's

CEO, Hareb Thani Al Dhaheri, said at the time: “Flight simulators are essential for pilot training, and we are confident that our new FTD simulator will significantly enhance the efficiency of our training, as it simulates realistic learning environments on a single-engine aircraft.”

The FTD will allow Horizon to enhance its training by practising abnormal situations that cannot be trained for in an actual helicopter. Being compliant with EASA's FTD Level 2 requirements, the device will be used for type rating, IFR checks and initial courses (MCC, ATPL).

Entrol will also offer it as a flight and navigation procedures trainer (FNPT II) for flight schools to optimise the costs of their instrument rating and commercial pilot licence courses.

Based in Madrid, Entrol has been developing and manufacturing simulation and training devices for flight schools and operators since 2005.



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