

17th July 2008
Farnborough International Air Show

AgustaWestland Focuses R&D on Helicopter Effectiveness

AgustaWestland invested approximately 11% of its revenues in research and development activities in all areas of vertical-lift technology in 2007 to expand the capabilities of its existing product range and to install in its future rotorcraft programmes. Three key areas of research AgustaWestland is focussed on are the improvement of flight performance and ability to operate in all weather conditions, reductions in environmental impact through greater fuel efficiency and noise reduction, and finally the development and introduction of new avionic systems to enhance mission effectiveness and capabilities. These developments are aimed at the improving the operational capabilities of rotorcraft while reducing operating costs and environmental impact. Additionally, as leader in the VIP and corporate transport helicopter market, AgustaWestland, is also investing in new technologies that will enhance comfort levels for passengers and aircrew.

AgustaWestland uniquely, as a helicopter manufacturer, has in-house the complete capability to define, design, develop and deliver complex fully integrated helicopter mission systems including the in-house design and development of rotorcraft automatic flight control systems and fly-by-wire flight control systems.

These competencies have enabled AgustaWestland to develop fully integrated solutions bringing together the avionic and mission systems and sensors to enhance mission effectiveness. Through improved Human Machine Interface (HMI) and data fusion AgustaWestland is leading the way in improving aircrew situational awareness and all weather operating capability.

With the aim to reduce customer operating costs and increase helicopter availability, additional areas of study include the development and introduction of HUMS (Health and Usage Monitoring Systems) on existing helicopters and, as new designs, the introduction of damage tolerant concepts and enhanced fatigue life assessment, providing fewer life-limited parts, all with longer retirement or overhaul times compared to previous designs. As far as environmental and public acceptance, including comfort, are concerned, AgustaWestland activities are also focussed on enhancement of aerodynamic efficiency and reduction of vibration levels, providing reduced fuel consumption and extended life-cycles.

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