

HELiDATA

News & Classified

Incorporating

***Helicopter* INTERNATIONAL and MILITARY HELICOPTER NEWS**

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The German Navy officially retired its last Westland Sea King Mk.41 helicopters in August, with the transfer of one aircraft to the Bundeswehr military museum in Gatow, Berlin on 8 August, after some 50 years in service. At the last count the Navy had 17 Mk.41s in its inventory, but has been

Continued

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dismantling and cannibalising examples at the Nordholz Air Base as it neared the retirement date. The official retirement date of the type was 31 August, with a final flight around the area by two especially painted aircraft, serial 89+63 in SAR colours and 89+58 in a multi-colour celebration scheme. However a number of aircraft drawn from the fleet have continued to fly on pilot training sorties after the government pledged to donate six aircraft to Ukraine where they will operate alongside three ex-Royal Navy Sea Kings which are already in service there. In Germany the type has now been replaced by the NH Industries NH-90 Sea Lion.

Deliveries from Westland took place between April 1973 and September 1974 when the last of the 23 Sea Kings were delivered. Since then the type has logged about 185,000 flying hours including over 17,000 search and rescue missions and some 12,000 direct assistance missions, with only two aircraft being written off and four withdrawn from use.

The **French Navy** Flotille 35F in Var, which is trialling a Schiebel **Camcopter** S-100 for maritime surveillance, **deployed** the unmanned air vehicle (UAV) to monitor a Mediterranean area towards Marseilles **during** the recent **Olympic Games**. Operating from Saint-Mandrier to cover the Olympics area of some 22,500 nautical sq.miles the aircraft provided real-time data of the area, where a number of sailing, kite surfing and windsurfing events took place.

For the role the S-100 was equipped with a high performance EO/IR camera and an Automatic Identification System to monitor and detect any suspicious activity at sea, demonstrating at the same time the versatility of applications and capabilities of the Schiebel UAV.

Industry sources claim that **Airbus** Helicopters and **Lockheed Martin/Sikorsky** Aircraft are **no longer bidding** for the **UK** New Medium Helicopter (**NMH**) **Tender**, intended to replace the Airbus SA330 Puma Mk.2 in Royal Air Force service, after the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) reduced the number required from up to 36 aircraft to between 23 and 33 aircraft, directly equivalent to the existing Puma fleet size. In the meantime the MoD ordered six Airbus H145 helicopters to replace the Bell 212s in Brunei and the Bell 412s in Cyprus, which had also been part of the NMH package, as are replacements for six Army SAS Airbus AS565-N3 Dauphins.

In conjunction with these changes the MoD cut the NMH purchase budget from £12 billion plus VAT including spares and support etc to £9.5 billion. As a result Lockheed Martin and Airbus reportedly pulled out of the competition, arguing that the programme was no longer feasible within the proposed contract value. It now appears that Leonardo, offering the AW149 helicopter is now the sole company bidding for the business. Leonardo is also bidding to develop the European Next Generation Rotorcraft capability (NGRC) and sources suggest this could lead to the company forging a partnership with Airbus Helicopters to meet this requirement. Lockheed Martin is also offering their own answer to NGRC with a consortium of European partners. (*Helidata News & Classified* 45/16 7 August).

The **Polish government** signed a US Foreign Military Sales (**FMS**) Letter of Offer and **Acceptance** in mid-August for the acquisition of 96 Boeing **AH-64E Apache** attack helicopters. The deal is part of the Polish Kruk attack helicopter programme, which includes maintenance and support of the aircraft by the local Polish defence industry, as well as the establishment of training programmes and development of a composite laboratory in the country.

The Polish government selected the AH-64E for its new attack helicopter in September 2022 and the confirmed commitment represents the largest FMS order in the history of Boeing's Vertical Lift division. Boeing says the purchase of the AH-64E will strengthen Poland's operational capability and interoperability with the United States, NATO and allied nations. It also means that Poland will become the largest Apache operator outside of the United States, and the 19th global customer for the aircraft since production began more than 40 years ago. Production of the helicopter is centered on Boeing's facility in Mesa, Arizona, with more than 1,290 Apaches currently operating worldwide.

The United States Department of State has approved a **possible** Foreign Military Sale (**FMS**) contract with the

Netherlands Government for Boeing **CH-47** and **AH-64** training, valued at an estimated \$305 million including related equipment, such as training ammunition, IT support and other related items.

The training activities will take place at Fort Cavazos in Texas where the US Army already hosts personnel and equipment from the Royal Netherlands Air Force from No. 302 Squadron. This training includes the American Falcon Exercise, which serves as a certifying event for Dutch military units and personnel to deploy aboard, often supporting US lead coalition operations. The proposed sale also supports US Foreign policy goals and national security objectives by improving the security of a NATO ally that is a force for political stability and economic progress in Europe.

● The US State Department has also approved a possible FMS agreement with the Republic of Korea, which has requested to purchase up to 36 more AH-64E Apache helicopters with related equipment and spares for an estimated cost of \$3.5 billion. The request will double the size of the South Korean fleet and includes four spare T700-GE-701D engines, up to 14 mast-mounted AN/APC78 fire control radars with radar electronic units, up to 456 AGM 114R2 Hellfire missile and other weaponry and avionics equipment.

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Start-up air transport company **Future Flight Global** is to **purchase** up to 116 **Archer Aviation Midnight eVTOL aircraft**, in an order valued at up to \$680 million, with an upcoming pre-delivery payment promised of nearly \$5 million. The new company has been in development since 2021 and includes former Titan Aviation chief executive Karen Singh among its founders.

Together with Archer the two companies will collaborate on ecosystem development, infrastructure, regulatory engagement and demand generation, with Future Flight Global initially operating select routes within Archer's planned air taxi service. Ultimately the two partners aim to operate flights via a joint venture initiative worldwide, including South East Asia, Europe and the Middle East. For Archer the new agreement grows its prospective order book to nearly \$6 billion, as well as opening up premium international markets.

Air Chateau DWC, a Dubai-based helicopter and vertiport operator and Wings Capital Management of Abu Dhabi, have **signed** a Memorandum of Understanding with Regional Airports Company LH (RACL), a state-owned company in the Republic of Maldives, to create a **partnership to roll out** VIP and eVTOL **air taxi services** across the island chain, as well as facilitating cargo operations and tourist flights across over 1,200 islands. The immediate aim is jointly to develop a network of vertiports and drone ports, and to attract investors to kickstart investment in the Maldives.

RACL currently operates eight airports across various regions of the Maldives and wants to expand this coverage to 15 in the near future, aligned with ongoing government planning initiatives. In islands spanning for about 333km (207 miles) from the capital city of Male towards northern and southern parts of the chain, Air Chateau will receive rights to operate by RACL, state privileges to operate helicopters and eVTOL operations in the Maldives for 20 years. The company will also be responsible for attracting foreign direct investment in the project. Eventually the project aims to establish up to 100 hybrid vertiports across 1,200 islands, with touchdown and lift off areas, Final Approach and Take Off (FATO) zones, terminal waiting areas, and charging and fire retardant systems. The project also aims to develop 500 drone ports dedicated to cargo operations, with similar charging and safety infrastructure.

It is expected that future eVTOL services would complement other fleet modes, in a hub and spoke system which will enhance infrastructure and technology, advancing the air mobility across the region. The broader aim is encapsulated in Project "Elevate Maldives", which aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and carbon credits, as well as boosting Maldivian talent and job creation, and spur the development of new advanced mobility services and businesses in the region.

The European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) has **purchased** the National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) **interest in the EBACE Convention and Exhibition**, and will become the sole producer of all future editions of EBACE, commencing with the next

event in 2025. EBACE is well recognised as the premier business aviation event in Europe and the two organisations say they will continue to work together to promote this sector of the aviation market in Europe, the United States and elsewhere around the world.



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The **Magpas Air Ambulance**, which provides Helicopter Emergency Services (HEMS) cover across Eastern England, has **signed** a new four year **contract with Castle Air** for the provision of a Leonardo AW109SP Grand New helicopter, after failing to agree terms with the previous partner, Gama Aviation last February. The decision to operate the A109SP however represents a down sizing from the Leonardo AW169 previously operated by Gama, and Magpas is still advertising for pilots to fly the new helicopter. As a consequence the company has not published a start date for restarting operations, more than seven months since giving up the AW169.

The new pilots will however work alongside the Magpas HEMS medical team members, whilst the helicopter itself will be based at the relatively new Magpas headquarters and hangarage at Alconbury in Cambridgeshire. Magpas also operates three rapid response vehicles and crews across the region.

Air Medical service provider, **Air Methods** has **partnered with the El Paso Fire Department** in Texas to **establish Five STAR**, a new air base to provide emergency medical services for the El Paso community. The five year contract was approved by the El Paso City Council on 6 August and will be equipped with an Airbus H130 helicopter, operated and staffed by Air Methods, and based at Five Station 35 in Pine Springs.

Strategically located along the US Mexican border, at the intersection of Texas and New Mexico, El Paso is the epicentre for a population of 2.5 million people, and the Fire Department responds to nearly 80,000 calls per year involving fires, medical emergencies, hazardous materials and other emergency events. Five STAR will provide a 24/7 emergency air medical coverage across the city, the country and southern New Mexico, with trained flight nurses and paramedics able to support patients with critical care



The Austrian **OAMTC Air Rescue Service** **took** delivery of its **40th Airbus H135** helicopter in early August, completing a key part of a modernisation of its fleet. The club previously ordered five latest generation H135s and then activated an option for two more, including the recently delivered aircraft which is the seventh machine.

The helicopter is now being customised by OAMTC engineers with necessary technical and medical equipment and is expected to enter 24/7 all weather operations in early-mid September.

needs whilst they are transported to appropriate medical centres.

Bell Helicopter Textron has **delivered two Model 407GX**i helicopters to the **Louisiana State Police**, bringing their fleet of Bell aircraft up to nine. The Louisiana Air Support Unit already operates a Bell 407GXP, two Bell 430s, a Bell UH-1H, UH-1V and Huey II, and one Bell 206L-4 LongRanger.

The Support Unit provides 24/7 services to provide emergency response assistance to all local, state and federal law enforcement agencies across Louisiana, and the newly delivered Model 407GX*i* helicopters are expected to allow the unit to significantly expand upon their public safety mission portfolio. Meanwhile a completions contract for the two new additions has been agreed with PHI MRO Services, to be carried out at the company's facility in Lafayette.

A **second Airbus H145** for the **Midland Air Ambulance** was with Airbus Helicopters UK at their Oxford base in mid August, being fitted out with a full medical interior and related equipment following shipment by road from the Airbus factory in Germany. The new aircraft is an H145D3 variant registered G-HMAA (cons. number 21304), which features five main rotor blades, rather than four blades on its H145 which has been in service since 2021.

G-HMAA will replace one of two Airbus EC135s which is also in service with the Air Ambulance, on

lease from Babcock Onshore Ltd. The other EC135 which Midland Air Ambulance owns, will remain in service alongside the two H145s for the foreseeable future. The latest arrival should enter service at the beginning of April 2025 at the Air Ambulance Tatenhall base in Staffordshire.

The **London Air Ambulance** Charity has reached its **£15 million target** to purchase two new replacement helicopters and bring them into service. The charity began fundraising in 2022 when it ordered two Airbus H125 helicopters at that year's Farnborough International Air Show but was still £3 million short of the target earlier this year. In a six week campaign, led by a London-based entertainment charity, it raised the shortfall and now expects to bring the new aircraft in service later this year, in an October timeframe.

Last year the Air Ambulance teams attended to more than 2,000 patients and remains the only service in the city that can perform life saving interventions, such as blood transfusions and open chest surgery at the scene. This is especially critical when patients are so seriously injured that there is no time to reach hospital. The two Airbus H135 helicopters will operate primarily from the air ambulance helipad base at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel, which is one of the highest in Europe.

Rotor Technologies of Nashua, New Hampshire in the United States which has been developing a large uncrewed helicopter in collaboration with Robinson Helicopters, designated the R550X, has now **announced** two **new unmanned air vehicle (UAV) variants** based on the R44, both with a maximum take off weight of 1,134kg (2,500lb). Air Truck is a utility UAV with 454kg (1,000lb) plus of payload and Sprayhawk is an agricultural UAV with a 455 litre (110 gall) tank capacity.

The first Sprayhawk production aircraft, registered N168RK (cons. number 14770), is already complete and has been undergoing ground testing ahead of delivery to an agricultural partner in the US Midwest later this year. All of the first batch of production Sprayhawks will be delivered to early access partners throughout next Spring and are expected to begin commercial spraying operations in the 2025 Corn Run, which sees aircraft being used to spray corn and soy bean fields in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin.

Rotor Technologies is now opening up orders to other US and Brazilian customers for Air Trucks and Sprayhawks, with delivery slots available in late 2025 and early 2026. The first 2025 production run will however be limited to 15 Sprayhawks and 10 Air Trucks, with introductory pricing set at \$850,000 for the Air Truck and \$990,000 for the Sprayhawk, for orders placed before 15 December this year.

Billed as the largest agricultural drone available in the world, the Sprayhawk features a 545 litre (120 gallon) spray tank with 10m (33ft) spray booms, capable of spraying over 240 acres per hour and flying at over 129km (80 miles) per hour. It can be operated by a ground crew of just two people and fitted with optional features, including an autonomous spray path and terrain following algorithms, and camera and LIDAR sensors for detecting wires and avoiding obstacles. Flight time is up to 50 minutes between refuelling. By comparison a standard Robinson R44 fitted out for crop spraying can carry only 273l (60 galls) of liquid and spray 193 acres per hour with a direct operating cost 83 percent higher than the Sprayhawk.



Archer Aviation Inc has announced plans to introduce a **Los Angeles air mobility network** in 2026, using the company's Midnight five seat eVTOL aircraft to link locations across the region. Archer's planned network includes vertiports at key locations such as Los Angeles International Airport, Orange County, Santa Monica, Hollywood Burbank, Long Beach and Van Nuys, working with partners to develop the system.

Among the partners is the University of Southern California, which hopes to develop plans for converting its existing heliports for the Midnight and other eVTOL aircraft to provide an easy, quick and sustainable way to get to and from its campuses, sport's facilities and hospitals in the future. Also aboard are the Los Angeles Rams sports team, which is interested in collaborating with Archer to develop exclusive vertiports at Woodland Hills and at Hollywood Park, the near 300 acre district council centred around the 80 million sq.km (31 million sq.ft) Sofi Stadium.

 	
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20 Leonardo AW119 PR-CBG (cons. number 14765) of Brazilian Fire Fighting Corps substantially damaged in autorotative forced landing on bank of the Araguaia River, following loss of power whilst en route to Aragarças airport with six persons on board. Helicopter came down in shallow water but remained upright.

21 Bell 206BIII N67110 (cons. number 5109) of MF Helicopters substantially damaged during agricultural mission near Cuba City, Wisconsin when it struck power lines and crashed into field. The pilot was uninjured.

21 Bell 206BIII N26UK (cons. number 1684) of Orlando Aircraft Sales suffered minor damage during agricultural flight near Springfield, Illinois when it clipped a wire and crashed into field.

22 Sikorsky S-64F I-CFAG (cons. number 64088) of Vigili del Fuoco, crashed on landing at Reggio Calabria airport on return from forest fire fighting mission and destroyed in post impact fire after rolling over on to port side.

23 Bell 206L-3 XB-RAQ (cons. number 51490) of private owner written off in western Mexico after loss of tail rotor control and impact on terrain.

24 Hiller UH-12E N3375T (cons. number 5237) of EL Automation substantially damaged at Bonners Ferry, Idaho when it was unable to gain enough rpm to escape ground

effect from the hover. Helicopter struck rock and pilot lost control, striking terrain.

25 Robinson R22 VH-HYQ (cons. number 3835) of Pearl Coast Helicopters destroyed when it collided with R22 VH-HQH (which see) and crashed at Camaballin, Kimberley, Western Australia during cow mustering mission. 1 fatal.

25 Robinson R22 VH-HQH (cons. number 3936) of Helico Australia destroyed in collision (see above). 1 fatal.

25 Mil Mi-28 of Russian Air Force destroyed in crash at Zhizdrinsky Raton, Kaluga during training mission and anti-drone patrol when fire erupted in cockpit. 2 fatal.

25? Eurocopter AS350B2 N6087C (cons. number 2677) of US Customs and Border Protection, substantially damaged near Nuevo Laredo, Mexico on US border when it autorotated into trees following a loss of power.

26 Mil Mi-24 of Mali Air Force written off in Kidal region of Mali and forced to make emergency landing after coming under intense fire from a separatist group. The helicopter was fighting on behalf of the Wagner Private Military Group.

27 Schweizer 269C-1 N61486 (cons. number 0084) of private owner written off near West Carthage, New York after fuel blockage whilst hovering at 15m (50ft) over commercial property under development by pilot. The helicopter descended almost vertically into a



marshy area behind the property and came to rest upright, but with the lower fuselage crushed inward and upward and the tail boom partially separated. The main rotor blades remained attached to the hub with no evidence of rotational damage and the tail rotor blades were also undamaged.

A post-crash investigation confirmed that the control runs and transmission continuity remained operational, including the anti-torque and cyclic control continuity. However an examination of the fuel system revealed that the fuel vent tube from the single fuel tank was blocked with debris from a mud dauber wasp nest. In addition the tank was filled with approx 11 gall of automobile gasoline. All other systems and electrics were undamaged, including the magnetos and carburetor.

The investigation also revealed that the pilot did not possess a helicopter rating, only for a single-engine aeroplane and neither his personal log book or the aircraft logs were to be found. His most recent medical certificate was issued in January 2011, at which time he reported a total flight time of 400 hours. The helicopter was purchased in December 2016.



- OFFSHORE WORLDWIDE

CHC Helicopter Service in Norway has signed a **new contract with DNO** to support its operations in the North Sea, providing crew changes and transportation services for the *Noble Invincible* and the *Deep Sea Yantai* rigs. The *Noble Invincible* is situated at the Falstaff wells and began operations at the end of August, whilst the *Deep Sea Yantai*, operating at the Kjotlkake Wells, will begin operations in December/January. Exchange in 1981 but founded a decade earlier in 1971. It re-entered the North Sea in 2017 following two decades in the Middle East, when it holds contracts

in Kurdistan and Yemen with local partners.

The CHC parent company also holds a 25 percent stake in the Cheysaor offshore exploration project. Both the new contracts in Norway will be serviced by Sikorsky S-92A helicopters DNO is Norway's oldest oil and gas company, listed with Oslo stock.

Leasing company International (LCI) and partner **Somitome Mitsui Finance** recently **delivered two Airbus H145D3 helicopters** on long term leases, one to Pacific Helicopters Ltd (PHL) and other direct to PHL parent company, Santos Ltd. The placement with Santos represents LCI's first ever direct lease to an end user.

Santos is a global energy

company headquartered in Adelaide, Australia and with operations across Australia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and the United States, whilst PHL is a major provider of helicopter services in Papua New Guinea for energy, mining construction and telecommunications companies. The company has supported the country's businesses since its inception, with over 160 employees and opportunities for locals to become pilots and engineers. The two H145D3s will support liquid natural gas (LNG) and other energy facilities in Papua New Guinea whilst also supporting the Santos foundation activities and its work to build resilient communities.

Industry sources claim that the **UK government** has decided **not to renew** the **Ministerial VIP helicopter contract** and will let it expire at the end of this year. Currently the service is provided by Sloane Helicopters, using an Agusta Westland AW109SP GrandNew, with a backup aircraft available during maintenance periods from the company's corporate fleet.

The use of rotary-wing transport for government travel began in 1996 under a Conservative government and was renewed by Labour under Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1997, using three Agusta A109E helicopters. Subsequently it was downgraded by the Conservatives to the single AW109SP when they came back in power in 2010.

The decision now to cancel the contract is the latest financial cut put forward by the recently elected Labour government, which has been warning of a range of budgeting reductions due to funding pressures. This particular cut however was actually originally put forward last year by the then Conservative government, but withdrawn following evidence of the security and time saving benefits of using the helicopter for Ministerial travel, against the delays and extra security risks involved with ground travel.

According to aerospace analysts at Bloomberg Intelligence **helicopter deliveries** are expected to **grow** again in 2025, following the decline this year, largely due to supply chain issues. Bloomberg also say that increased oil prices could boost demand for higher-margin offshore twin engined models, with Airbus Helicopters already seeing gains. Military demands due to the conflicts in the Ukraine and Middle East are also expected to bolster new sales, especially for European manufacturers.

The analysis notes that Poland's commitment to buy 96 Boeing AH-64E Apache attack helicopters could lead the military trend, whilst evidence of backlogs and orders at Airbus and Leonardo are seen as evidence of increased demand and a precursor to increased build rates. Airbus Helicopters logged 233 orders in the first six months of 2024, up from 131 in the same period in 2023, whilst Leonardo secured orders to the value of Euro 3.6 billion in value over the six months in 2024, versus Euro 2.8 billion in 2023, confirming the improved demand.

Electric air taxi developer **Joby Aviation** Inc, which is headquartered in California, has officially **applied to** the **Australian** Civil Aviation Safety Authority (**CASA**) for its five seat **eVTOL** aircraft **to be certified** for use in Australia. The company is requesting validation of an existing US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Type Certificate, under a bi-lateral agreement between the United States and Australia.

Joby has already applied to have its FAA type certificate, once received, validated by the Japan Civil Aviation Bureau (JCAB) and the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), and expects its eVTOL air taxi to revolutionise travel around the major cities with quiet, emissions free services once the certification process is finalised. To date Joby has logged more than 53,108km (33,000 miles) of eVTOL flight with full scale prototypes, including a demonstration in New York City flying from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport. Joby claims a flight from the heliport to the JFK International Airport will take just seven minutes, with almost zero noise and zero emissions. The company has also completed three of the five stages of the FAA type certification process required for commercial service.

Powered by six electric motors and with a maximum speed of 322km/hr (200mph), the aircraft features swivelling propellers that allow it to take off and land vertically, but translate to forward flight in the cruise, with lift provided by full span wings. Joby has so far raised more than \$2 billion in funding for its eVTOL programme, including investments from Toyota, Delta Airlines, SK Telecom, Uber and Baille Gifford.



Schweizer RSG, which manufactures the S300, S300CBI and S333 helicopters in Fort Worth, Texas has **appointed Helix AV** as its new **UK Sales and Service Centre**. Based at Manston airport in Kent but with a sales and maintenance facility in Berkshire, Helix AV has 15 years experience as an independent manufacturer representative, with UK and US aviation authority approvals and European Aviation Safety Authority approval expected soon.

The company has already hit the ground running, with seven used Schweizer 300s currently for sale, including four ready immediately. These include a 1988 300C, a 2004 CBI and a 2007 CBI, the latter with less than 2,000 airframe hours total time. Headed up by Gary Slater as its Director, Helix AV will cover the whole of the UK and Ireland for Schweizer RSG, with an established reputation for having a strong customer base and full service operation. In addition to representing the Schweizer line, the company is also a Bell Helicopter Independent Representative for the same territory, giving customers both piston and turbine engined options for their next helicopter purchase.

The **first Vertiport** testbed in the **UK** has been **approved for construction** at Bicester airfield by the local planning authority, with a start to be made this autumn. The facility will be situated alongside the airfield's existing grass runway and is a collaboration between the 44 Bicester Motion site and Skyports.

It will include a compact 160sq.metre (1,722sq.ft) passenger terminal for testing the ground infrastructure, and flight operations, according to Bicester Motion. Flying from the facility initially will be the Vertical Aerospace VX4 eVTOL aircraft, which will use the site to carry out demonstration flights and test key procedures ahead of the commercial launch. Development of the Vertiport is also backed by the UK Research and Innovation Future Flight Challenge and the Advanced Mobility Ecosystem Consortium.

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A Leonardo AW169 helicopter is shown in flight, viewed from a low angle looking up. The helicopter is white with blue and green accents. It has "AIR 70300" and "70300" written on its side. The main rotor blades are blurred due to motion. In the background, there is a large, modern building with a glass facade and some trees. The sky is blue with some clouds.

AW169

Leonardo Helicopters provide unique, integrated and affordable products to the global healthcare delivery system.

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