

ANNUAL SALES PAUL LEWIS / WASHINGTON, DC

# Output slumps as economies slow

Eurocopter and Robinson Helicopters stay top of turbine and piston charts, but Bell sees market share fall



Sales of the Robinson R44 have been hit by the strong US dollar

Eurocopter and Robinson Helicopters have further consolidated their respective positions at the top of the civil turbine- and piston-powered rotorcraft markets, as overall output of Western-built commercial helicopters declined in the wake of an economic slump and the 11 September attacks.

Last year, around 870 European and US-manufactured civil helicopters were delivered, compared with nearly 970 in 2000. Eurocopter and Robinson were again the two largest producers, accounting for 328 piston-powered and 280 single and twin turbine-powered helicopters respectively.

Of the 510 civil turbine helicopters produced during 2001 by the eight largest US and European manufacturers, Eurocopter accounted for 54%. The company attributes much of its success to the popular EC120B Colibri, with the North American market alone accounting for more than a quarter of the 81 single-engine machines delivered last year. "2001 was a great year for us and we saw a significant growth in bookings, up 30% over 2000," says Eric Walden, American Eurocopter vice-president for sales and marketing.

Bell delivered 23 fewer civil machines last year than in 2000

and saw its overall share of the market trimmed to just under a quarter. "Deliveries were down on last year, the biggest issue being reliability of the Bell 407, for which we now have fixes in place. We did see a resurgence in some aspects of the civil and corporate market in the fourth quarter with 45 orders and deposits taken," says Bill Maddox, Bell executive director marketing, sales and support.

The last 12 months has also proved a disappointment for MD Helicopters, which had set itself a goal of delivering of 60 machines but instead only managed 28. Contributing factors included a Turkish police order for 10 MD600Ns being delayed for one year by local economic difficulties, and legal action blocking the delivery of four MD902 Explorers to the Netherlands police.

On the positive side, MD delivered its first Medevac-equipped Explorer to a US operator, placed another two with Indonesian offshore operator Air Fast and is hoping to deliver 58 helicopters this year, according to MD chairman Henk Schaecken.

Sikorsky saw a slight increase in the number of S-76C+ deliveries to 10 machines as it nears completion of a three-phase transfer of fuselage

production to the Czech Republic. "We're now assembling the first full Aero Vodochody-built aircraft for delivery in March. At that point we'll be in a position to get back to normal availability of 15 helicopters per year. At full rate we'll be capable of 24 per year," says Tommy Thomason, Sikorsky vice president for civil helicopter programmes.

The downturn has also affected the piston market, with deliveries totalling 134 R22 and 194 four-seat R44s which cumulatively were down 16% on last year. "Sales are down from last year for two reasons - the recession and a very strong US dollar. Everyone is adopting a wait and see position," says Frank Robinson, president of Robinson helicopters.

## CIVIL/PARAPUBLIC DELIVERIES

	2000	2001
AgustaWestland	53	57
Bell	145	122
Branley	6	0
Enstrom	7	8
Eurocopter	281	280
Kaman	3	3
MD Helicopter	41	28
Robinson	390	328
Schweizer	36	34
Sikorsky	7	10

2001 figures supplied by manufacturer.

CERTIFICATION JUSTIN WASTNAGE / LONDON

## EC145 to get US approval but not UK clearance

Eurocopter is to receive US Federal Aviation Administration certification for its EC145 at the HAI Heli-Expo next week. The helicopter, however, continues to face hurdles to UK certification.

The medium-weight utility twin helicopter, also designated the BK117C-2, is scheduled to be formally given its FAR29 certification at Heli-Expo in Orlando, Florida.

The Franco-German company will use the approval to kick-start a heavy marketing drive to capture the growing US emergency medical services (EMS) market.

However, the EC145 is unlikely

to be certified in its present form for the UK market.

The UK Civil Aviation Authority's rules on helicopters over 3,100kg (6,800lb) currently prohibit the EC145's single Perspex windshield, which eliminates the centre post by using flex-ball cables running from the cockpit controls up between the two panes to the overhead flight control unit.

The EC145 has a maximum take-off weight of 3,550kg.

Eurocopter paid over €1 million (\$870,000) to get the EC145's forerunner, the BK117, redesigned with glass windscreens to meet UK

bird-strike criteria.

The initial redesign was rejected because glass thickness caused reduced visibility. Only one BK117 is in operation in the UK and it is unlikely that Eurocopter would repeat the redesign without significant demand for the aircraft.

But the manufacturer is said to be considering more minor modifications to convince the CAA, which has yet to receive a formal application for EC145 certification.

Eurocopter president Jean-François Bigay says: "It's obvious that we must have a UK certificate

for the EC145, so if technical modifications need to be made to meet UK concerns we will discuss these."

Manfred Merk, programme manager for the EC145, says: "Once we have a potential customer, we will approach the CAA and discuss a certification base."

Eurocopter UK distributor, McAlpine Helicopters' sales director David Lewis says: "If we can leap the regulatory hurdles, there is a market in offshore and passenger transit applications of between six and 10 aircraft over the next five years."

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