AIRBUS HELICOPTERS' POWER LINE MAINTENANCE MISSION FIT FOR RTE

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Airbus Helicopters' UK design team has been contracted to deliver a power line maintenance customisation kit for H135s operated by RTE-STH, the helicopter division of French public utility company RTE. The contract also requires customisation of an H135 allowing it to conduct the low-level, precision flying required for powerline surveillance and maintenance operations. The EASA-certified kit, based on aircraft modifications and development of seven baskets and bespoke attachment devices, allows RTE engineers direct access to carry out essential maintenance work on live power line cables.

The H135 customisation and powerline maintenance mission fit is part of RTE's recent light, twin engine fleet renewal. As part of the requirement, the UK design team is developing a new, EASA-certified mission fit enabling RTE to continue to successfully monitor and repair power lines and pylons without disrupting the power supply. The seven baskets and bespoke aircraft solution, including anti-spin attachment devices and embedded aircraft sensors and pilot aids, provides RTE with a dedicated, high-tension work package. Initial flight testing is now underway and delivery is expected in 2018.
RTE is responsible for the largest electricity network in Europe with 100,000km of lines in France and its division, RTE-STH, is responsible for the monitoring and maintenance of the

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power line network with the company’s fleet of helicopters.

Laurent Giolitti, RTE Heliborne Works Department Manager, said, “The state of the art H135 and the bespoke mission systems developed by Airbus Helicopters’ UK design team will enable RTE to continue its extensive live powerline maintenance operations, while meeting the latest safety and certification standards”

Colin James, UK Managing Director, Airbus Helicopters said, “The ability to access and repair a power line without disrupting the up to 500,000 volts of electrical current is critical for RTE. Airbus Helicopters’ mission fit, developed by the company’s UK design office, ensures the H135 is the ideal complement to their fleet”.

This project, developed from a clean slate approach and certified to the latest standards, demonstrates the versatility of Airbus Helicopters’ UK design expertise and enables the company to offer dedicated mission fit solution for energy and electricity companies worldwide and the RTE-STH contract is the UK team’s 27th exported design solution to date.

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