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Helitech 2011: Guimbal marks milestone and first UK delivery

September 29, 2011

Bruno Guimbal, the engineer behind the Cabri G2 light helicopter, has used the Helitech exhibition in Duxford to mark the company's first delivery to the UK.

Guimbal officially handed over Aircraft 1028 to its new owners, the Kemble-based Cotswold Helicopter Centre, at Helitech 2011 before signing up another distributor, Denmark-based Air Service Vamdrup, which has become the eighth distributor of the aircraft.

Speaking to Shephard, Guimbal said he had high hopes for the Cabri in the UK. Guimbal is aiming his aircraft at the light helicopter market, where the Robinson R22 and R44 dominate.

'When I first designed the Cabri, I saw the British market as an important one as it is already a big market for Robinsons, at least three times bigger than the French market,' he said.

'The next big milestone for us will be when we are seen and people think of us as the reference light helicopter in the market,' he added.

Guimbal also said that as worldwide sales increased, he was learning valuable lessons about aircraft support and parts.

He has already had some success with 28 deliveries, including two to Australia, two to New Zealand and six to Germany. The aircraft are being used for private flying and flight training while a customer in the Netherlands has been contracted to fly pipeline inspection sorties.

One company, Germany-based Heli-Aviation, has ordered a further two aircraft following success and high levels of utilisation on two examples they already own. The pair have flown some 1,500 hours in 14 months.

The company built 12 aircraft in 2010, 13 so far in 2011 and will be able to build two per month in 2012 with a staff of 25 at the firm's Les Milles plant in Southern France.

The company is continuing to work with Eurocopter on a UAV conversion of the Cabri called the Orka. Eurocopter has a 51% stake in the Orka while Guimbal holds the other 49%. No orders have been forthcoming so far.

Tony Osborne, Duxford

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