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Latest Variant of the AW101 Makes Paris Debut

AgustaWestland, a Finmeccanica company, is pleased to announce that the latest variant of the AW101 medium lift helicopter is making its debut at Paris Air Show. The latest variant of the AW101 features new more efficient main rotor blades, new more powerful engines, a new cockpit display system and a new up rated tail rotor. These technology upgrades enable the AW101 to fly faster, further with more payload, whilst improving performance in extreme conditions, enhancing crew effectiveness in the cockpit and increasing mission capability. This latest version of the AW101 is already in production and available to export customers.

The new main rotor blades, developed under the fourth British Experimental Rotor Programme and known as BERP IV technology blades, incorporate an improved plan form, new aerofoil sections and an advanced aero elastically tailored structure to provide reduced vibration, 10 knots additional cruise speed and 650 kg additional lift capability over the previous AW101 main rotor blades. The blades first flew in September 2006 and have now completed a flight test programme during which the AW101 was flown at speeds up to 198 knots and at altitudes of 13,000 ft. Aircraft fitted with BERP IV blades have also been flown at weights up to 16,500 kg - 1,900 kg over the normal Merlin gross weight and 900 kg over the current AW101 maximum gross weight. BERP IV blades represent the latest generation of rotor technology developed under a jointly funded AgustaWestland and UK Ministry of Defence rotor technology development and demonstration programme.

This variant of the AW101 has also recently completed a series of icing trials giving the aircraft the same exceptional icing clearance of the previous variants, allowing flight in known icing conditions.

The more powerful General Electric CT7-8E engines, rated at 2,527 shp (1884 kW) each for take-off, provide 12 percent more power than previous CT7-family engines, increasing the AW101's payload by over 900 kg (2,000 lbs) when operating in hot conditions at high altitudes. Following an extensive flight test programme the CT7-8E engines are now certified and have proved totally reliable during all phases of testing.

The new fully integrated flight and mission cockpit display system utilizes five 25 cm x 20 cm (10 in x 8 in) LCD main displays that give AW101 pilots 70 percent more display area enhancing their management of flight, system and mission data.

The new fully articulated tail rotor has been designed to take advantage of the extra power available from the engines and to allow the AW101 to operate at its current 15,600 kg maximum all up weight as well as future higher take off weights. The new tail rotor gives the same excellent control margins as the original tail rotor design but at the higher weights, including the ability to hover in 40 knot crosswinds.

The AW101 has already been cleared with an extensive range of mission equipment for a wide variety of roles including troop transport, search and rescue, combat SAR, anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, over the horizon targeting, maritime patrol, airborne surveillance and control, airborne mine counter measures, amphibious support and VIP transport. In 2008 the AW101 successfully conducted aerial refuelling tests between with a C-130 Hercules tanker, further demonstrating the aircraft's mission capabilities.

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