



AIRBUS HELICOPTERS

Asia-Pacific fleet shows signs of recovery

The Asia-Pacific helicopter market is showing positive signs of recovery, with economic optimism, aircraft utilisation and purchase intention all on the up, according to the latest Asia-Pacific Civil Helicopter Fleet Report produced by Asian Sky Media. The Asia-Pacific fleet increased 3.9 percent in 2017 compared with 2016 at 4,086 civil helicopters, with a net total of 154 new and pre-owned helicopters, according to the report. The bulk of the fleet continues to operate in four countries — Australia, Japan, Mainland China and New Zealand — which account for 62 percent of the region's total fleet.

Mainland China accounted for the majority of the fleet additions during the year, adding a net 86 helicopters, representing year-on-year growth of 17.4 percent. In Mainland China, there are signs of onshore growth in both the single and light twin categories, as well as growth opportunities in segments including emergency medical services (EMS), firefighting and powerline maintenance. There are even encouraging signs in the offshore market, says the report.

Greater China, including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, had a 14.7 percent fleet growth year-on-year, with 84 new helicopters delivered, as well as 13 pre-owned helicopters and 17 deductions.

Australia, which is the most mature and largest market in the region, saw a 3 percent increase in its civil fleet in 2017. While the country's offshore market contracted in 2016, last year it saw the largest offshore fleet growth in the region, increasing by 9 percent with seven net helicopter additions. The EMS market saw growth of 5.2 percent.

The Indian civil turbine fleet grew 1.7 percent in 2017, with deliveries of seven helicopters for offshore operations. India has the region's third-largest offshore market and the segment is expected to grow significantly over coming years, says the report.

Indonesia saw a 2.5 percent increase in its fleet, largely boosted by pre-owned types, while the region's second-largest fleet in Japan remained unchanged, with only one net addition. Malaysia saw a 1.9 percent increase in its fleet in 2017, despite the off-

AUSTRALIA IN NIGHT TRIALS

Australia's Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) has been conducting night-time firebombing trials as it seeks to demonstrate the viability of the use of helicopters on night-time fire-fighting missions. The latest trials demonstrated how helicopters with the use of night vision technology can work at night to hover-fill and ground-fill, before conducting several water drops in a forest, as well as on a series of controlled burns in grassland. The trial has been "hugely successful," according to emergency management commissioner Craig Lapsley.

shore segment contracting by 10.4 percent.

New Zealand, which has the region's fourth largest fleet grew by 3.5 percent, with 98 percent of the new additions being pre-owned and only one new helicopter delivery.

Papua New Guinea experienced a 2.8 percent contraction in its fleet, while the Philippines witnessed 3.8 percent growth. South Korea's fleet also increased, by 2.3 percent, while Thailand had 4.7 percent growth.

Airbus accounts for the majority of the region's fleet at 1,748 helicopters or 43 percent of the market, followed by Bell with 1,106 helicopters (27 percent) and Leonardo with 400 (10 percent). Single-engine helicopter types account for the majority of the fleet, with 2,107 currently in service (52 percent of the total fleet), followed by medium types at 1,263 or 31 percent, light twins at 495 (12 percent), 214 heavy helicopters (5 percent) and just seven super medium types in operation (less than 1 percent).

The bulk of the fleet (54 percent) is performing multi-mission roles, followed by corporate (9 percent), offshore (9 percent), law enforcement (7 percent), EMS (6 percent) and search and rescue (6 percent).

Despite signs of recovery in the market, Jeffrey Lowe, managing director Asian Sky Group, notes that the market is "not out of the woods yet by any stretch", with the region facing a multitude of challenges, including high customs tax, VAT, not enough general aviation airports, limited heliport access, lengthy flight approval processes, airspace access and air traffic control issues, lack of experienced crew, MRO facilities and difficult regulatory environments. He stresses, however: "The opportunities outweigh the challenges." — EMMA KELLY