

Griffin fleet reaches 75,000 hours

On 3rd April 2007, a Bell 412 EP Griffin operating on a routine Defence Helicopter Flying School (DHFS) training sortie brought the FB Heliservices Ltd Griffin fleet to a total of 75,000 flying hours achieved.

The company operates a total of 59 helicopters supporting a variety of training, operational and Search and Rescue missions employing 80 helicopter instructors, 420 engineers and 200 support staff.

In 1996, following a highly competitive fly-off contest FBH, in conjunction with its sister company FBS Ltd, won a 15 year contract to supply the DHFS at RAF Shawbury with 9 extensively modified Bell 412 EP aircraft and 38 Eurocopter AS350 BB aircraft. The Bell 412EP aircraft, known in UK military service as the Griffin, were supplemented by a further 2 aircraft in 2002.

The helicopters are provided to the DHFS as part of a comprehensive training system where a mixture of FBH and military instructors provide ab-initio training to all RN, Army and RAF helicopter pilots and RAF Air Load Masters. Around 165 pilots and 30 ALMs graduate each year. Eight of the Bell 412 Griffin aircraft are based at RAF Shawbury while 3 aircraft are based at the Search & Rescue Training Unit at RAF Valley to provide initial Search & Rescue techniques training. The flight training is supplemented by the use of a Flight Systems International six axis full motion Bell 412 EP simulator at RAF Shawbury that is also provided, maintained and operated by FBH.

During 2002, a further UKMOD contract was won by FBH to provide and maintain four modified Bell 412 EP helicopters for operation by 84 Squadron at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus. The Squadron's tasks include Search & Rescue, Casualty and Medical Evacuation, Fire Fighting and Passenger, Troop and Freight Carriage. This contract has recently been extended by 2 years and now runs until 2010. The completion of 75,000 hours on the FBH Griffin fleet represents a significant milestone for both the UK MOD and the Company.

