

AgustaWestland joins UK Air Rescue



UK Air Rescue, the British consortium of Bristow Helicopters, FB Heliservices and Serco seeking to run the UK's Search and Rescue Helicopter (SAR-H) service, has been joined by AgustaWestland, a global leader in helicopter systems and training.



A Bristow maintained SAR helicopter flying last year

Allan Blake, Director of UK Air Rescue, said: "We are delighted to have AgustaWestland on board. AgustaWestland design helicopters that perform search and rescue operations around the world in all manner of situations and conditions. UK Air Rescue will combine their invaluable experience with the extensive SAR capabilities and experience with other helicopter types already within the partnership to ensure that our solution delivers exactly what the customer needs and what the public deserves."

UK Air Rescue is currently one of three bidders who have been selected to participate in a dialogue and subsequently offer a solution in competition, which will be assessed jointly by the Ministry of Defence and Maritime and Coastguard Agency.



An FBH maintained Bell 412 used for SAR operated by 84 Sqn in Cyprus

The MOD and the MCA together provide a 24-hour military and civil helicopter SAR service for the UK SAR Region from 12 bases around the UK. Currently this SAR helicopter service is provided by Royal Air Force and Royal Navy Sea Kings and civilian helicopters under contract to the MCA. The SAR-H programme will see the harmonisation of all UK SAR helicopters under one contract that will still retain a high proportion of military aircrew alongside civilian aircrew trained to the same high standards. The service will continue to be managed jointly by the MOD and the MCA. It is expected to commence in 2012 and run for at least 20 years.



RAF Seaking SAR helicopters will need replacing within 10 years