

Squirrel fleet reaches 250,000 hours



FB Heliservices has just achieved 250,000 flight hours with its fleet of 38 AS350 BB 'Squirrel' helicopters, marking an impressive milestone in its history. The aircraft entered service in 1997 and are operated for the Defence's Defence Helicopter Flying School.

"We find the AS350 BB to be the perfect aircraft for our training missions, which range from ab-initio to tactical mission training", stated Peter Richardson, Managing Director of FB Heliservices. "Our 'Squirrel' fleet performs an average of 25,000 flight hours per year, is reliable and easy to maintain", he continued.

Starting in 1997 and completed in less than twelve months, a production line was established by Eurocopter seeing 38 AS350BBs produced at Marignane, delivered to McAlpine

Helicopters Ltd., Eurocopter's distributor in the UK, where the aircraft were significantly outfitted, and then flown to Bournemouth Airport for final detailing work by FR Aviation Ltd.

Twenty-six helicopters are shared between the Central Flying School (CFS) and the basic training squadrons at RAF Shawbury. The CFS helicopters are used to train instructors and aircrewmembers. The basic training machines provide ab-initio training for student helicopter pilots. Six of the AS350 BBs are fitted with hoists and floats to enable overwater hoist training. The remaining twelve helicopters, all fitted with NVG cockpits, are located at the Army's Middle Wallop airfield in Wiltshire where they are used for the advanced and tactical phases of the training of Army pilots.