

H225LP and AS332L2 Super Puma Helicopter Return to Service

Executive summary

- On the 7th July, the UK and Norwegian Civil Aviation Authorities announced their decision to lift operating restrictions on Airbus Helicopters H225LP and AS332L2 helicopters.
- The announcement by the UK and Norwegian authorities does not automatically clear the way to an immediate return to service of the H225LP and AS332L2 helicopter fleet. Operators must first prepare and validate a detailed safety case including specific maintenance processes, tooling and training.
- EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency), who are the certification body for the aircraft, lifted its previous flight prohibition in October 2016.
- The announcement by the UK and Norwegian authorities was met with disappointment by the UK and Norwegian unions.
- IOGP's Aviation Subcommittee, HeliOffshore, and the North Sea Unions are formulating appropriate risk based responses to the announcement and any potential return to service of the H225LP and AS332L2 helicopters.

Background

Following the tragic helicopter crash off Turoy, Norway in April last year, both the UK and Norway Aviation authorities, as well as EASA grounded the H225LP and AS332L2 variant Super Puma helicopters. The EASA ban was lifted in October 2016, however both the UK and Norwegian authorities decided to maintain the bans until more technical details of the cause of the crash were known.

On the 7th July, the UK and Norwegian regulators announced their intention to remove the restrictions that prevented operators from using the H225LP and AS332L2 helicopters. The lifting of restrictions is based upon several pre-conditions, including changes in design of certain components, early replacement of components, improved maintenance and inspection methods, more frequent inspections and a reduction in the thresholds to reject worn components. Individual helicopter operators will need to supply safety cases to ensure they have all the necessary measures in place for a return to service. The guidance is aligned with the most recent EASA Airworthiness Directive No, 2017-0111 (Issued 23 June 2017).

Following the announcement of the lifting of the ban, Airbus and the UK and Norwegian CAA's agreed to share the technical information that led them to lifting the flight restrictions.

HeliOffshore are working with their membership to try and coordinate the creation of these safety cases and are working "collaboratively with all stakeholders in pursuit of our shared goal of eliminating accidents and ensuring safety for the passengers and crew who travel to work offshore".

Response to the announcement

Oil Companies

Several IOGP member oil companies have stated their positions publicly that they have no immediate plans to use the H225LP and AS332L2 helicopters in their North Sea operations.

Helicopter Operators

HeliOffshore have requested Airbus and the UK and Norwegian CAA's provide their Technical Group with the information that led to the lifting of the bans, so that their technical experts can evaluate the information thoroughly. HeliOffshore's members have agreed to work collectively to evaluate the key tenets of the Airbus technical safety case and, facilitate and share information to benefit the larger group as they seek to conduct their own operational safety cases.

Unions

The Unions have reacted with "surprise and disappointment" to the lifting of the ban as well as the manner and timing of the announcement. As advocates of workforce engagement, they have set out their stance against being transported in these types of aircraft until the workforce have been properly consulted. They have also called for a public enquiry into the 6 accidents or ditching's of the H225LP and AS332L2 series of helicopters in the last 8 years. They have stated they will be asking "all North Sea oil companies commence a structured and consistent survey of workers about this aircraft type".

IOGP's Position

Since the accident in Turoy in April 2016, IOGP's Aviation Sub-Committee (the ASC) have been fully engaged and informed of progress. ASC members have been present at almost every briefing and update provided by Airbus and the AIBN, the Norwegian air accident investigation branch. Airbus Helicopters presented their findings to the ASC at their meeting in Dallas in March this year and Airbus were questioned at that meeting given the similar circumstances of the G-REDL AS332L2 crash in April 2009 and the Turoy crash.

IOGP and the ASC have also been working closely with the Unions and HeliOffshore to provide a coordinated approach to the regulators and manufacturers ensuring any return to service of these aircraft types is properly considered and risk based.

Finally, IOGP's position is that it is for the individual helicopter operators, and more importantly their customers, to decide whether they will reintroduce the helicopters back into service. We will be working hard with all stakeholders to ensure our members have all the adequate and relevant information they need to make this very important decision.

For more information please contact Chris Hawkes at IOGP ch@iogp.org

Examples of Recent Media Coverage

- 1) Oil companies play down expectations of 225 return to service:

<https://www.energyvoice.com/oilandgas/north-sea/144381/shell-supermajors-no-plans-return-super-pumas/>

- 2) UK trade unions (RMT and Unite---see attached statement) criticise lifting of operating restrictions:

<https://www.energyvoice.com/oilandgas/north-sea/144684/unions-stand-fast-flying-super-pumas-calls-public-inquiry/>

- 3) Norway's Industri Energi union criticises lifting of operating restrictions:

<https://www.energyvoice.com/oilandgas/north-sea/144532/norwegian-union-brands-cao-lifting-flight-ban-disappointing/>

- 4) HeliOffshore's position gets media attention:

<https://www.energyvoice.com/oilandgas/north-sea/144648/helicopter-safety-body-wants-technical-data-super-puma-return/>

- 5) Report on helicopter capacity situation in North Sea:

<https://www.energyvoice.com/oilandgas/north-sea/144766/north-sea-industry-getting-without-super-pumas/>

- 6) Please also review HeliOffshore's news items on the subject and the CAA announcement

<http://heli offshore.org/heli offshore-takes-collaborative-approach-assessing-safety-case-super-puma-return-service/>

<https://www.caa.co.uk/News/Restrictions-on-H225LP-and-AS332L2-Super-Puma-helicopters-to-be-lifted/>

About IOGP

The International Association of Oil & Gas Producers (now IOGP and formerly known as OGP) is the voice of the global upstream industry. Oil and gas continue to provide a significant proportion of the world's energy to meet growing demands for heat, light and transport.

Our Members produce more than half the world's oil and about one third of its gas. They operate in all producing regions: the Americas, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, the Caspian, Asia & Australia.

We serve industry regulators as a global partner for improving safety, environment and social performance. And also act as a unique global forum in which our Members identify and share knowledge and good practices to achieve improvements in every aspect of health, safety, the environment, security and social responsibility.

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