

Airbus collaborates with Wilhelmsen to develop unmanned aircraft systems for maritime deliveries

Skyways' shore-to-ship pilot trial to commence in third quarter of 2018

Athens, 5 June 2018 – Airbus and Wilhelmsen Ships Service have entered into a strategic collaboration to drive the development of an end-to-end service for safe deliveries of parcels with an unmanned aircraft system (UAS), in the maritime industry.

The announcement was made today at the biennial Posidonia maritime exhibition taking place in Athens, Greece, with the MoU signed by Airbus' and Wilhelmsen's representatives.

Skyways is an experimental project aimed at developing a safe and commercially viable aerial unmanned delivery system for use in dense urban cities in its first trial phase. The project is being led by a team in Singapore, where plans are progressing towards the launch of a first trial system at the National University of Singapore in July.

The MoU signature with Wilhelmsen paves the way for the start of a second trial phase which will cover the delivery of goods from the Singapore coast to ships anchored at bay – commonly known as 'shore-to-ship'.

Under this collaboration, Airbus is the overall Skyways system architect and provider, contributing its expertise in aeronautical vertical lift solutions and experiences from its first trial phase, to develop the UAS for shore-to-ship deliveries. The UAS is an innovative system-of-systems that includes aviation-standard UAVs, ground control stations, air navigation systems, and operational and maintenance procedures. Wilhelmsen, with its wealth of experience in ship agency services, will develop and provide customer services, and ensure compliance of the UAS operations with maritime safety and security regulations.

The initial two-week shore-to-ship pilot trial will begin in the third quarter of 2018, delivering parcels to vessels anchored off the coast of Singapore – one of the world's busiest ports. Command and delivery centres will be set up at the pier to facilitate the deliveries, with an initial delivery range of up to 3km from the shoreline. A second delivery station will be positioned at an open space in Marina South to extend delivery coverage to more anchored vessels.

Airbus' Skyways lead Leo Jeoh, said: "This collaboration with Wilhelmsen, the first of its kind in the region, gives us a unique test bed where we can trial, refine and shape the future of shore-to-ship drone technologies. This also serves as an exciting opportunity to bring together the strong domain expertise of both Airbus and Wilhelmsen, to pioneer the future of UAS in the maritime industry."

"We are absolutely thrilled to be working with a forward thinking, industry leader like Airbus. When we announced last year that we were pursuing drone delivery, we were greeted with a fair amount of scepticism, but our collaboration with Airbus, shows we really do mean business," said Marius Johansen, Vice President Commercial, Ships Agency at Wilhelmsen Ships Service.

Press Release

“As an outward looking company, eager to utilise technology to help improve our customers’ experiences, drone delivery is a perfect fit for our agency business. As part of our standard husbandry services, we organise the delivery of essential spares, medical supplies and cash to master via launch boat day in and day out all over the world. Delivery by drone is much more cost effective, quicker, and frankly safer for all involved.”

While drones have already been mooted as one way to deliver items on shore and at sea, the use of UAS in the maritime industry shapes the possibility to enlarge existing ship agency services’ portfolio, increase productivity by up to six times, lower delivery costs by up to 90%, reduce carbon footprint, and significantly mitigate risks of accidents associated with launch-boat deliveries.

About Airbus

Airbus is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2017 it generated revenues of €59 billion restated for IFRS 15 and employed a workforce of around 129,000. Airbus offers the most comprehensive range of passenger airliners from 100 to more than 600 seats. Airbus is also a European leader providing tanker, combat, transport and mission aircraft, as well as one of the world’s leading space companies. In helicopters, Airbus provides the most efficient civil and military rotorcraft solutions worldwide.

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