

Airbus partners with Hiratagakuen to test future eVTOL flight routes and concept of operations in the Kansai region

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Osaka, 7 September 2022 – Airbus is partnering with Japanese helicopter operator Hiratagakuen to develop advanced air mobility services in the Kansai region and beyond. This is a key addition to the company's strong regional footprint and growing international network to pioneer the future of mobility.

Through this agreement, Airbus and Hiratagakuen will tackle crucial aspects required to launch a commercial transportation service with CityAirbus NextGen. As a major first step, the partners' joint project to organise a simulation of ideal routes, concepts of operations and necessary equipment for safe eVTOL flights in the Kansai region, has been selected by the Osaka prefecture, with a demonstration flight scheduled for later this year.

With the aim to implement air mobility services beyond urban environments, the joint work of Airbus and Hiratagakuen will support the development of advanced air mobility solutions with CityAirbus NextGen, for use cases ranging from air medical services to commercial air transport and ecotourism in a variety of operational contexts. To reach this objective, and with the support of local stakeholders, Airbus and Hiratagakuen will use an H135 helicopter to test advanced navigation and communication technologies for safe operations of eVTOLs in urban environments, while simulating CityAirbus NextGen's flight configuration.

Mitsuhiro Hirata, Vice President, Aviation Operation Division of Hiratagakuen, said "We are very pleased to conduct a demonstration flight in the Osaka-Kansai region with Airbus for the future of mobility, using the latest H135 helicopter. We have been operating Airbus helicopters for many years and highly appreciate their high safety, performance, operational reliability and proven after-sales support. We are aware that a revolution in air transportation is now approaching in the Osaka area, and we expect CityAirbus NextGen to play a central role in this revolution."

Balkiz Sarihan, Head of UAM Strategy Execution and Partnerships at Airbus, said: "We are honoured to further our long standing collaboration with Hiratagakuen by working on this exciting journey towards zero emission flights. Their expertise in commercial air transport and air medical services operations makes them an ideal partner for defining the operational framework for advanced air mobility with CityAirbus NextGen in Japan".

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Hiratagakuen is a Kansai-based helicopter operator who specialises in Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS), passenger transport, flight training, and maintenance. The company's current fleet includes 14 H135 and two H145 helicopters.

In September 2021, Airbus unveiled its eVTOL prototype CityAirbus NextGen, to explore advanced air mobility technologies and bring urban air mobility services to life. The Company just announced the construction of a dedicated centre to test the aircraft's systems in the lead up to its maiden flight. Airbus is also working closely with industrial and institutional partners to lead the development of urban air mobility ecosystems, as recently announced with ITA Airways in Italy, or through the launch of the Air Mobility Initiative in Germany.

The relationship between Airbus and Japan dates back over 60 years. More than 600 commercial and fixed wing and rotorcraft have so far been delivered to Japanese operators. Airbus leads the Japanese helicopter market with over 50% market share in the civil and parapublic sectors, and over 370 helicopters in service with 100 customers. In Kobe, Airbus' helicopter facilities offer a strong suite of helicopter products, training services and turnkey solutions across emergency medical services, law enforcement, electronic news gathering, and parapublic segment.



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