



AT YOUR FINGERTIPS: AIRBUS FLIES A FULLY AUTOMATED HELICOPTER WITH A TABLET

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Airbus successfully tested a new simplified human machine interface along with advanced autonomous features through a project code-named Vertex. These technologies, developed by Airbus UpNext, are controlled by a touchscreen tablet and aim to simplify mission preparation and management, reduce helicopter pilot workload, and further increase safety. Airbus Helicopters' FlightLab flew fully automated from lift-off, taxi, takeoff, cruise, approach and then landing during a one hour test flight by following a predefined route.

During this flight, the pilot monitored the system which is able to detect unforeseen obstacles and automatically recalculate a safe flight path. Whenever necessary the pilot can easily override the controls through the tablet and resume the mission afterwards. The flight test period ran from the 27th of October through to the 22nd of November at the Airbus Helicopters' facility in Marignane, France.

Michael Augello, CEO of Airbus UpNext, commented: "This successful demonstration of a fully autonomous flight from takeoff to landing is a great step towards the reduced pilot workload and simplified HMI that the Airbus Urban Air Mobility team intends to implement on CityAirbus NextGen. It could also have immediate applications for helicopters in low level flights close to obstacles thanks to the information provided by the lidars* on board."

Airbus Helicopters will continue to mature the different technologies that comprise Vertex: vision

based sensors and algorithms for situational awareness and obstacle detection; fly-by-wire for enhanced auto-pilot; and an advanced human-machine-interface - in the form of a touchscreen and head worn display for inflight monitoring and control.

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