RUAG DORNIER 228 DEMONSTRATOR PERFORMS EMERGENCY SAR OPERATION AT CAPE VERDE

News / Business aviation

The RUAG Aviation Dornier 228 demonstrator performed an emergency search and rescue operation off the coast of Praia, Cape Verde, on 11 April 2016. The aircraft was contacted for assistance due to its renowned capabilities for low altitude flight and real-time situational awareness. The kayaker was rescued successfully, despite prevailing visibility issues. The SAR mission was initiated 7 hours into the aircraft's non-stop return flight to Europe, from Natal, Brazil; this following the completion of the Dornier 228's premier Latin America Demo Tour. The RUAG Aviation aircraft returned to its home base at Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany, on 12 April 2016.

The RUAG owned Dornier 228 was beginning its approach to the Praia, Cape Verde, airport when the air traffic control tower identified it as the sole aircraft in the vicinity capable of providing SAR assistance under the prevailing conditions. Low-lying cloud cover, darkening skies, plus the small size of the watercraft posed significant challenges. Once engaged, the aircraft continued its descent from its approach altitude of 10'000 ft. to 1'000 ft. to perform the Expanding Square search pattern.

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The emergency SAR operation took place off the southern coast of Cape Verde at 19:30 UTC, a full 7 hours after the aircraft had departed Natal, Brazil. In total, the aircraft and its crew accrued 40 additional flight minutes over and above the non-stop transatlantic crossing and without a refueling opportunity. The aircraft, equipped according to its Multirole (MR) configuration, actually completed the SAR pattern at two locations. The crew finally identified the exact rescue location after their instrumentation recorded a short distress signal and one crew member sighted a flare fired by the lone kayaker.

Commander Franz Huber, Factory Test Pilot, RUAG Aviation, explains, "Once the tower relayed the coordinates, we programmed our Flight Management System (FMS) and began the programmed search pattern. When the location failed to reveal a SAR subject, the tower relayed an adjusted set of coordinates and we repeated the procedure there. Our sensors received a 20-second acoustic burst providing our instrumentation with the necessary, final course adjustment. Thanks to the Dornier 228's high maneuverability we were able to react immediately and position the aircraft directly above the location which had emitted the distress signal. The bubble windows and the unobstructed down view allow excellent situational awareness and enabled us to see the kayaker's flare as it was deployed."

The Dornier 228 is recognised for its exceptional capabilities, especially at low altitudes. "Fortunately, ours is one of the most suitable aircraft for this type of mission and it happened to be in the right place, at the right time, and in the right configuration to provide the necessary support," states Fabian Kölliker, Product Manager Dornier 228, RUAG Aviation. "We focused on the

Multirole (MR) configuration for our Latin America Demo Tour so we were able to fulfil this SAR mission both successfully and efficiently. Our crew was happy to contribute, and waited eagerly until the Guarda Costeira confirmed the kayaker had been rescued."

RUAG Aviation's Dornier 228 demonstrator, based in Germany, was on its return trip at the conclusion of its month-long, premier Latin America Demo Tour. The demonstrator logged over 20'285 NM between 29 February and 10 April to provide government officials, officers of armed forces, business executives and other interested parties with the opportunity to experience the Dornier 228 in person. Throughout the course of the tour, the Dornier 228 visited over 17 cities in 9 countries and registered over 850 visitors.

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