



AIRBUS HELICOPTERS CELEBRATES THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GAZELLE'S MAIDEN FLIGHT

News / Business aviation, Manufacturer



Airbus Helicopters celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Gazelle's maiden flight today during a conference at the museum of aviation in St Victoret, near the company headquarters.

Fifty years after its maiden flight on 7 April 1967, the Gazelle is still being operated by nearly 100 customers in 34 countries and it is appreciated for its ease of maintenance and high reliability.

Developed and manufactured in cooperation with the United Kingdom at the end of the 1960s, more than 1,250 Gazelles have been delivered. Today 470 rotorcraft – more than a third of all Gazelles manufactured – are still in service, a hundred of which are operated by the French army.

A helicopter of many "firsts", the Gazelle was the first Airbus helicopter to be equipped with the

Fenestron which is still present on Airbus' light and medium rotorcraft, including the first of the H generation, the H160. This major innovation improves safety around the tail rotor on the ground and reduces the sound level of the rotorcraft. It was also the first Airbus helicopter to be equipped with glass-resin blades developed in cooperation with the German company Bölkow. Lastly, it was the first helicopter in the world to be awarded the IFR qualification, category I, by the FAA (Federal Aviation Authority), allowing operators to fly to instrument flight rules with a single pilot on board.

On 15 May 1971, the Gazelle broke three speed records in its category:

- Over 3 km: 310 km/h
- 15/25 km: 312 km/h
- Over 100 km in a closed circuit: 296 km/h

The Gazelle was a major success in the military sector and nearly 80% of the rotorcraft in service are used by armies around the world. By the end of December 2016, the Gazelle fleet had accumulated more than 7 million flight hours. The Gazelles (SA341 and SA342) that have accumulated the most flight hours (14,200 and 13,100 respectively) are currently operating in the United States.

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