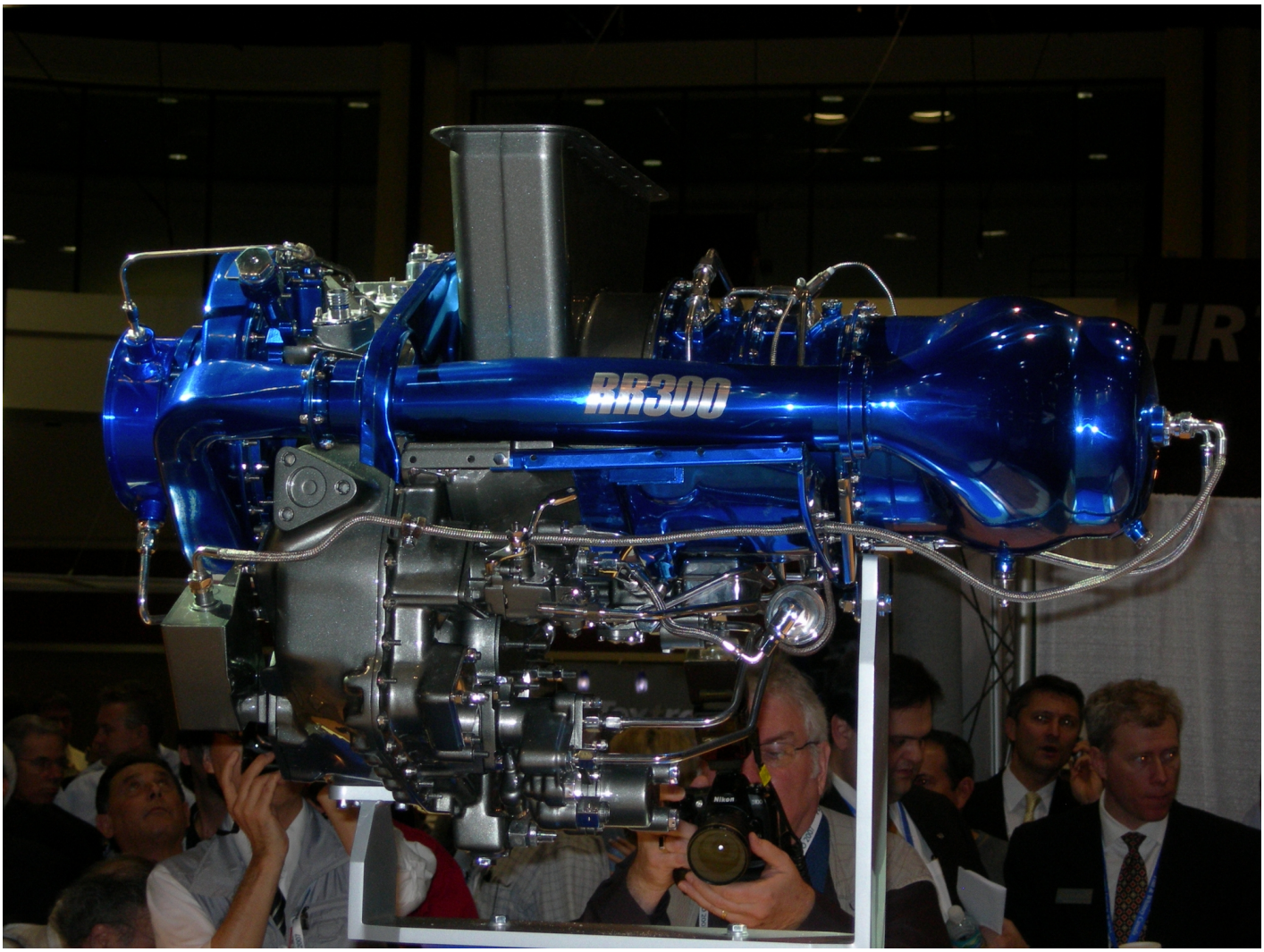
INNOVA COMPOSITE HELICOPTERS PICKS RR300 ENGINE

News / Business aviation, Manufacturer



Rolls-Royce has reinforced its position in the light turbine-powered helicopter segment, last week signing with Innova Helicopters for the supply of the RR300 engine for the developmental C630 and formalising a long-term supply agreement with US manufacturer Enstrom.

The three-year pact with Innova, part of Naples, Florida-headquartered Innova Aerospace, will see the engine maker provide engineering and technical installation support to the certification programme for the C630.

Innova is working to bring the carbonfibre monocoque design to the market, having partnered with Auckland, New Zealand-based designer Peter Maloney, who pioneered the development of the rotorcraft.

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Although initial flights of an experimental version of the C630, using the R-R M250 powerplant, have been carried out, the first certification prototype is being assembled with a first flight scheduled for year-end, says Greg Fedele, Innova Aerospace executive vice-president of corporate development.

Initial production will be located in Auckland, but Fedele says the simplicity of the helicopter's construction means "we could have multiple manufacturing locations around the world".

It has so far taken orders for "more than 30" examples of the five- to six-seat C630, says Fedele. Certification testing will be in New Zealand, with the US Federal Aviation Administration working on a parallel approval process.

Meanwhile, the pact with Enstrom cements the five-year relationship between the pair on Enstrom's single-engined 480B platform, powered by the R-R M250-C20W.

More than 220 five-seat 480Bs are in service, with R-R the exclusive engine provider.

The agreement, signed at HAI Heli-Expo on 2 March, follows formal signings with Bell Helicopter and Robinson Helicopter in 2015, and comes ahead of a potential agreement with MD Helicopters.

The 10-year agreement with Bell continued supply of the FADEC-equipped 250-C47B/8 powerplant for the Bell 407GXP, while the 10-year partnership with Robinson covers the supply of RR300s for the airframer’s only turbine-engined helicopter, the five-seat R66.

According to R-R, the company is close to an agreement with MD Helicopters for the M250-C47E engine, despite the airframer voicing concerns at the show on how long it is taking to supply the powerplant.

More than 31,000 M250 series engines have been delivered to date, with an accumulated 235 million flight hours.

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