CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

Bristow Group manages fleet with Sky Connect Tracking System

World’s largest and oldest offshore helicopter operator improves safety through better communication and tracking

Overview
As it operates offshore over vast expanses of water, Bristow Group must be able to track its fleet of helicopters so that it can divert aircraft in response to bad weather or a medical emergency. Bristow has found the solution in Honeywell’s Sky Connect Tracking System, which it has installed on approximately 270 helicopters in its commercial fleet to ensure reliable and robust satellite-based data and voice communications.

Background
Bristow Group is the largest provider of helicopter services to the global offshore energy industry, with major helicopter transportation operations in the North Sea, Nigeria and the U.S. Gulf of Mexico, and in most of the other major offshore oil and gas producing regions of the world, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Russia and Trinidad.

Bristow’s business units are in Australia, Centralized Operations, Europe, North America, Other International and West Africa. It also maintains service agreements and equity interests in helicopter operators in Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Norway, Russia (Sakhalin), Turkmenistan and the United Kingdom. Bristow’s fleet ranges from small helicopters that can transport four people up to large aircraft that carry 18 or 19 passengers.

Business Need
Bristow’s commitment to its clients is to provide a safe, reliable service that delivers their personnel to offshore platforms on time. Every employee, from cockpit to cubicle, understands that safety is everyone’s responsibility and the message is reinforced every day in safety meetings and at shift changes.

To ensure the safety of its passengers, Bristow Group equips its helicopters with advanced technologies and identified offshore communications as a vital area—especially as its flights often operate in bad weather and over the sea, out of reach of VHF radio reception.

Bristow wanted a system to deliver a higher degree of safety and provide a complete view of where its fleet was operating at any given time. Using the technology, operations staff would be able to see if aircraft needed to deviate from their intended flight plans or, if a medical emergency arises, they could be rerouted to respond more quickly.

Solution
Bristow Group identified Honeywell’s Sky Connect Tracking System as the ideal solution and has now installed it on its commercial fleet across the world. A complete system that helps helicopter operators more effectively manage their fleets, Sky Connect Tracking System uses the Iridium satellite network’s voice, tracking and messaging functions to deliver mission management capabilities that improve operations.

It is the only product of its type that was developed specifically for the aviation industry, and, through its text messaging functionality, provides an easy and quick way for pilots and dispatchers to communicate simple messages to each other.

Pre-stored messages with data fields and a full telephone keypad make text messaging an effective way for crew members to communicate and improve operations. An enhanced calendar feature also helps eliminate any overlaps in schedules.

Quick Facts

Honeywell solution
Sky Connect Tracking System

Customer results
- Increased level of communication without impact on pilot workload
- Tracking has improved safety by providing a circle of probability in case of an emergency
- Data messages sent from its aircraft mean Bristow Group can respond faster to technical issues, reducing aircraft downtime

Why Bristow Group chose Honeywell
- System has been developed specifically for the aviation industry
- Reliable and robust satellite communications— even when the weather is bad
- Need for improved communication and tracking to increase safety

Customer
- Name: Bristow Group
- Location: Houston, United States
- Industry: Airline
- Website: www.bristowgroup.com
way for crews to communicate up-to-date, accurate flight and operational information.

Messages sent to the helicopter by the dispatcher are displayed immediately and all messages received during the flight can be recalled. When equipped with Honeywell’s MMU-II cockpit dialer, the Sky Connect system can also include a voice telephone.

The system is tied into the aircraft’s audio panel and supports more than 500 pre-stored phone numbers.

Any Sky Connect Tracking System equipped aircraft in the world can be tracked in real time via the Iridium satellite network.

The lightweight transceiver sends encrypted GPS-based position reports at automated intervals to authorised control centres using secure data protocols.

Web-based software then displays the aircraft location, GPS flight plan, crew status and weather overlays on topographical maps for full situational awareness. Text messages from the aircraft are also displayed on the mapping screen.

**Benefits**

Glenn Oldbury is Bristow’s chief training captain at the airline’s base in Aberdeen, Scotland. “Honeywell’s Sky Connect Tracking System provides us with a number of important safety and operational benefits,” he said.

“Many of our flights go out of VHF communication when over the North Sea at low level and, often, in bad weather.

“This satellite-based communication gives us reliable and robust beyond line of sight (BLOS) voice and data communication which isn’t disrupted by adverse weather and which only costs a few cents for each data message we send.

“It is reassuring to know that, through the tracking functionality, our team on the ground is given a circle of probability in case of an in-flight emergency.

“The system also means that we are better able to respond to medical evacuations (medivacs), as our operations centre can see which aircraft are closest to the emergency and then reroute that flight to assist.

“Sky Connect’s text messaging function has also been a great way to increase communication between the aircraft and the operations team without it adding to pilot workload.

“By having a large database of pre-set messages, pilots can very quickly and easily send updates of a flight’s progress back to our operations team at the base.

“In addition, short burst data (SBS) messages about the aircraft’s performance can be sent back to base. We can pre-programme what type of information is sent in each transmission and the frequency at which it is sent.

“This information helps our operations team reduce downtime of the aircraft. They can see if minor repairs are needed before the next flight and have engineers and spare parts waiting for the helicopter when it lands.

“We have been delighted with the reliability and performance of Honeywell’s Sky Connect Tracking System and now look forward to using the latest version, Sky Connect Tracker III, which will be installed first within our new fleet of Eurocopter EC175 helicopters.”

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Glenn Oldbury, chief training captain, Bristow Group