Osprey Pilots Receive First FAA Powered Lift Ratings

Quietly passing a major aviation milestone, the Federal Aviation Administration issued on Aug. 4 the first civil Powered Lift pilot rating to Tom Macdonald, Bell Boeing V-22 tiltrotor chief test pilot at the V-22 Integrated Test Team's (ITT) pilot office at the Patuxent River Naval Air Warfare Test Center in Maryland.

Ray Stinchcomb, Jr., aviation safety inspector with the FAA Flight Standards District Office No. 7, awarded the certificate that specifically recognizes tiltrotor aircraft with a new pilot certificate category, the "Powered Lift" category.

Other qualified V-22 tiltrotor test pilots receiving FAA pilot certificates include: William Leonard and Martin Shubert of Bell Helicopter; William Norton and Steve Grohsmeyer of Boeing; U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. John Rudzis, ITT government flight test director; and Maj. Kevin Gross and Capt. William Witzig of the Marines.

Tom Macdonald, the first to receive the FAA powered lift rating, said, "All the pilots on the program are very enthusiastic about the future of tiltrotors and are pleased to see the acceptance of tiltrotors by the FAA. For all of us it has been a privilege to work on the Osprey program. This certificate is the icing on the cake."

Phillip Dunford, ITT director, said, "This is a significant day in the history of powered lift and for the test pilots associated with the program. They are the first pilots in the world to receive this certification."

"The establishment of the Powered Lift pilot certificate category represents one of the many areas in which the FAA is actively working to help introduce tiltrotor technology to main-stream civil aviation in the United States."

In addition to designing, testing and producing the V-22 Osprey tiltrotor for the Department of Defense, the Bell Boeing Tiltrotor Team is developing the Bell Boeing 609 commercial tiltrotor for civil certification by the FAA and subsequent manufacture for a variety of civilian applications. Increasing acceptance of leading-edge U.S. tiltrotor technology and recognition of the unique capabilities of tiltrotors are evident both in the U.S. and abroad.

In June 1995, a Patuxent River-based V-22 flew daily flight demonstrations with the Bell Helicopter XV-15 tiltrotor demonstrator aircraft at the biennial Paris Air Show at Le Bourget, France, and generated significant international military interest. Tangible interest in the newest tiltrotor design, the Bell Boeing 609, was shown earlier this summer when 36 advance orders were received by Bell Boeing for the aircraft at the 1997 Paris Air Show.

The Bell Boeing Tiltrotor Team comprises Bell Helicopter Textron of Fort Worth, Texas, a wholly owned subsidiary of Textron, Inc., and Boeing in Philadelphia, which produces rotorcraft and other advanced aerospace products.

V-22 Osprey

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