



HeliMedia delivers new HD Airborne inspection capabilities for National Grid



MX-10 HD turret

National Grid plc, international electricity and gas company, has updated its electricity grid inspection helicopters with two new L-3 Wescam MX-10 stabilised camera systems and two **HeliMedia Video Mission Boxes (VMBs)**.

HeliMedia, specialists in intelligence, surveillance and communications solutions was responsible for the overall mission system design, installation, training and EASA certification of the role equipment.

This technology refresh was driven by two key requirements. First, was the need to provide high resolution stills from Full Motion Video. The second was the need to increase the stand-off range of the helicopter, so that a larger proportion of the electricity grid could be inspected from the air. This airborne operation is critical to the UK's energy infrastructure, as identifying potential faults and repairing them before they fail, ensures a continuous supply of energy and as a result, delivers significant cost savings to National Grid.

National Grid own and operate two AS355 helicopters fitted with stabilised camera systems that are used for inspecting power lines and pylons from the air. The new stabilised camera system has a High Definition (HD) daylight camera, latest generation thermal imager, and an additional low light sensor. The VMB provided HD interfaces with all of these video outputs including display and video recorder.

To improve the operational efficiency still further, the VMB includes a Honeywell Sentinel moving map system integrated with the MX-10 and pre-loaded with National Grid's own database which details all of the power lines and pylons throughout the UK. This enables the MX-10 to automatically slew and lock-on to a pylon, while the operator looks for faults. Once satisfied with the result the operator will select the next pylon and the camera will automatically slew and lock.

National Grid operators from around the UK came to HeliMedia's facility, located at Gloucestershire Airport, for classroom training on the MX-10 by Wescam, moving map training from Honeywell and hands on, in-flight training by HeliMedia.

Mike Crichton-Kane, chief pilot at National Grid comments: "HeliMedia's project design and support has been invaluable. The ability to fly further away yet capture much better high resolution HD shots has massive business implications for us, including improved safety and cost savings. We will be able to do so much more with our helicopters with less disruption to those in built-up areas and farmers with livestock.

That, together with having our own database of network routes and pylons on our moving map will make us more efficient. HeliMedia has offered us advice, support and training throughout this project and it's their relationship with other top technology suppliers that means we have the best technology to move forward."

National Grid's end result is a cutting-edge solution that will increase the stand-off range and reduce inspection times, improving its operational efficiency. Both AS355 helicopters will be operational with this new role fit by late summer 2011.

HeliMedia Ltd

Aerotech Business Park
Bamfurlong Lane
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL51 6TU

Tel: 01452 857155

Fax: 01452 857115

info@helimedia.co.uk

www.helimedia.co.uk

VMB-S-NatGrid/Jan23-2012