



# Press Release

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**Vertical Flight Society Announces  
2021 Group Recipients of Its Prestigious Awards**

*Nine groups exemplify excellence in vertical flight advancements*

**Fairfax, VA, March 31, 2021** — The Vertical Flight Society today announced the 2021 group recipients of its prestigious awards program. Since the establishment of the VFS awards program in 1944, they have paid tribute to outstanding teams in industry, government and academia working on vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) aircraft, serving as a catalyst for stimulating technological advances. This year's winners will be recognized virtually during the 77th Annual VFS Awards Ceremony, premiering on Wednesday, May 5, 2021 at 2:00 pm EDT at [www.youtube.com/VTOLsociety](http://www.youtube.com/VTOLsociety). The ceremony is open to the public.

“Since the first VTOL aircraft — the helicopter — began taking off in the 1940s, VFS has been the organization that has supported vertical flight advancements,” said VFS Executive Director Mike Hirschberg. “This year's group awards highlight the incredible technological advances and capabilities of vertical flight aircraft, and those who develop and operate them.”

The Society's **Captain William J. Kossler, USCG Award** is given for the greatest achievement in the practical application or operation of vertical flight aircraft, the value of which has been demonstrated by actual service during the preceding 18 months. This year, the Kossler Award is being presented to the **California Army National Guard 40th Combat Aviation Brigade**, which battled the raging fires that engulfed the Sierra National Forest in central California in September 2020. The CH-47 Chinook and UH-60 Black Hawk crews rescued more than 240 Mammoth Pool Reservoir campers trapped by the fires, flying in thick smoke, intense embers and 20–30 kt (37–56 km/h) winds.

The **Grover E. Bell Award** is given for an outstanding research and experimentation contribution to the field of vertical flight development. This year's recipient is Bell's **Electrically Distributed Anti-Torque (EDAT) Development Program**. Bell's EDAT is a distributed anti-torque thrust system, using an array of electric fans with fixed-pitch blades. This concept offers greater simplicity than conventional designs and has the potential to reduce helicopter noise. Using a mix of custom-designed and commercial-off-the-shelf equipment, an international team developed and flew a Bell 429 demonstrator, providing valuable data on the practical use of hybrid-electric technology.

**Survival Systems International (SSI)** is this year's recipient of the VFS **Supplier Excellence Award**. This award is given to a supplier who, through the quality, innovativeness and cost-effective technology of its products, has made a notable contribution to improving the state of the art of vertical flight aircraft. SSI's contribution and support to Bell's V-280 Valor tiltrotor blade development and their recent creation of expanded polypropylene ballistic panels used on the US Navy's CMV-22 Osprey variant exemplifies their commitment and dedication to the support of their customers advancing vertical flight.

The **Robert L. Pinckney Award** is given in recognition of notable achievement in manufacturing research and development for vertical flight aircraft or components brought to fruition in recent years. This year's award is given to Sikorsky's **Raider X Main Rotor Blade (MRB) Spar Team**, Eric Dunn and Keith Schenone, who developed novel tooling strategies, leveraging additive manufacturing and the digital thread, to rapidly

implement robust manufacturing methods for a complex high-performance rigid main rotor blade spar to meet the demands of US Army's Future Vertical Lift (FVL) program.

The **Harry T. Jensen Award** is given for an outstanding contribution to the improvement of reliability, maintainability, safety or logistics support through improved design or technical achievement. This year, the joint **US Army/Sikorsky H-60 Flight Safety Parts Program** is being recognized. Initiated in the 1980s, the H-60 FSPP reached a major milestone this year: 20 million flight hours with no fatal accidents related to original equipment manufacturer (OEM) flight safety parts, demonstrating that it is a comprehensive and effective program for control of items directly affecting operational safety.

This year's recipient of the **Howard Hughes Award**, given in recognition of an outstanding improvement in fundamental helicopter technology brought to fruition in the previous 18 months, is the **SB>1 Defiant Main Rotor Gearbox Team**, including team members from Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin Company, and the Boeing Company. For the US Army's Joint Multirole (JMR) Technology Development program, the team developed an advanced coaxial main rotor gearbox that breaks performance barriers for medium lift rotorcraft through the strategic incorporation and maturation of low technology readiness level (TRL) technologies, and advanced analytical tools and/ methods.

The **Frederick L. Feinberg Award** is presented to the pilot or crew of a vertical flight aircraft who demonstrated outstanding skills or achievement during the preceding 18 months. This year's award is given to **US Air Force Special Operations Command's 7th Special Operations Squadron CV-22 Osprey crew**. In October 2020, this special operations wing executed a short-notice, long-range clandestine mission throughout the night to a target 2,000 miles (3,200 km) away, which required multiple refueling over some of the harshest African terrain. Leveraging the speed and range of the CV-22, the crew successfully performed an exfiltration mission from a remote location — totaling 11 hours and required a 17-hour crew day — showing significant self-sacrifice and courageous conduct.

The **Vertical Flight Heritage Sites Program** is intended to recognize and help preserve locations with the most noteworthy and significant contributions made in both the theory and practice of helicopter and other VTOL aircraft technology. This year, the former **Hughes Helicopter Culver City Plant** — the site of all Hughes Helicopter research, development and production from 1948 to 1983 — was selected for its historic significance. The enormous Building 15 was originally constructed in 1943 for the Hughes Hercules Flying Boat (aka "The Spruce Goose"). It was the home of the Hughes XH-17 and XH-28 tipjet "flying crane" helicopters, followed by the 1960s production lines of the Model 269A/TH-55 Osage trainer and Model 369/OH-6A Cayuse observation and attack helicopter. The AH-64 Apache prototypes were also designed and developed at this site. Today it is Google's Spruce Goose building, located in the Playa Vista neighborhood of Los Angeles, California. Learn more at [www.vtol.org/heritage](http://www.vtol.org/heritage).

The Vertical Flight Society previously announced the winners of its individual awards for 2021, which will also be honored at the 77th Annual VFS Awards Ceremony on May 5, 2021. Descriptions of the awards and past recipients are available at [www.vtol.org/awards](http://www.vtol.org/awards).

The Vertical Flight Society was founded as the American Helicopter Society in 1943 by the pioneers of the helicopter industry, who believed that technological cooperation and collaboration was essential to advance vertical flight. VFS is the global non-profit society for engineers, scientists and others working on vertical flight technology. For more than 75 years, the Society has led technology, safety, advocacy, and other important initiatives, and has been the primary forum for interchange of information on vertical flight technology.

**The Vertical Flight Society**  
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