



Press Release

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The Vertical Flight Society Celebrates 75 Years
Founded in 1943 as the American Helicopter Society

Fairfax, VA, June 25, 2018 — Seventy-five years ago today, the pioneers of the helicopter industry joined together and established a non-profit to advance vertical flight technology: the American Helicopter Society (AHS) was incorporated on June 25, 1943.

For 75 years, the organization has been working to advance vertical flight aircraft of all types and recently announced its name change to “The Vertical Flight Society.”

“The pioneers of the helicopter industry created our Society as a means where engineers, scientists, innovators, academics, students, operators and aviators could share their knowledge and learn from others,” explained Mike Hirschberg, Vertical Flight Society Executive Director. “Our 6,000 members around the globe continue to advance vertical flight every day, developing new and better products for world.”

The then-American Helicopter Society was founded at the birth of the American helicopter industry. In 1943, Sikorsky, Bell and Piasecki had each flown prototype helicopters, but there were no operational helicopters in existence. The engineers and leaders in industry, academia and government working to develop these new aircraft naturally cooperated during World War II and helped lay the groundwork for the postwar civilian helicopter market.

Although the pioneering companies were fierce competitors, they saw the value of cooperating to resolve the barriers to vertical flight, including technical challenges, safety and reliability, public acceptance, regulations, operational issues, and military and civil applications (including on-demand mobility, then known as “non-scheduled services”).

Since then, the Vertical Flight Society has helped the helicopter to mature into a robust machine with a global fleet of more than 50,000 civil and military aircraft, which regularly save lives and provide vital services for national defense, transportation and many other roles — often under extreme conditions.

For three-quarters of a century, the Vertical Flight Society also has nurtured transformative advancements, such as the development of military and civil tiltrotor (V-22 and AW609), the Joint Strike

Fighter (F-35B), Future Vertical Lift (FVL), micro air vehicles (MAVs), delivery drones and autonomous aircraft, including manned-unmanned aircraft teaming. Today, much like in the pioneering era of helicopter development, the Vertical Flight Society is providing leadership and a collaborative foundation for the development of new and innovative electric- and hybrid-electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft for urban air mobility (IAM) and other missions.

To celebrate its diamond jubilee, the Vertical Flight Society is hosting its 75th Annual Forum & Technology Display May 13-16, 2019, at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in historic downtown Philadelphia. Not only is this location within walking distance of many important sites of the founding of the America, it is also just a short distance from the location of the first four Annual Forums (1945 through 1948) held after the founding of the America Helicopter Society.

For 75 years, the Annual Forum has been the world's largest technical meeting and the only venue where academics, government leaders and researchers, military decision makers and aviators, and industry engineers and technologists gather to advance vertical flight technology.

"Forum 75 will return to the place where it all started," Hirschberg explained. "We invite the world's vertical flight community to join us in Philadelphia as we celebrate 75 years of supporting the development of 'The Future of Vertical Flight.'" More information is available at www.vtol.org/forum.

Founded in 1943 as the American Helicopter Society, the Vertical Flight Society today is the international organization that advocates, promotes and supports global vertical flight technology and professional development. For 75 years, the Society has provided global leadership for the advancement of vertical flight.

The Vertical Flight Society

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