



Press Release

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Vertical Flight Society Announces Surge in Membership

New military and civil vertical flight aircraft programs stimulate unprecedented innovation

Fairfax, Virginia, USA, Jan. 25, 2019 — The Vertical Flight Society, the world’s leading non-profit organization working to advance vertical flight, announces today that it has experienced strong growth in all its membership categories, thanks to the unprecedented global investment in advanced new military and civil vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) aircraft.

Worldwide increases in funding from governments and industry are fueling the development of advanced new high-speed tiltrotor and compound rotorcraft. The Bell V-280 Valor tiltrotor and the Sikorsky Boeing SB>1 compound Joint Multi-Role (JMR) Technology Demonstrators have proven the American industry’s ability to build a new generation of advanced rotorcraft for the US Department of Defense (DoD) Future Vertical Lift (FVL) program, while the European Union is funding the development of the Airbus Racer compound and Leonardo Next Generation Civil Tiltrotor as part of Clean Sky 2. The FVL and the Clean Sky 2 programs are both investing more than \$1B apiece in these four demonstrators.

In addition, the promise of urban air mobility is driving development of nearly 150 electric and hybrid-electric-powered vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft design concepts. Well over \$1B has gone into exploring the potential of this transformative capability, with much of the funding coming from outside of the aerospace industry.

“We are witnessing an unprecedented explosion in innovation and the Vertical Flight Society is both the community and the catalyst leading this change,” said VFS Executive Director Mike Hirschberg. “Over the past five years, we have successfully advocated for more than \$65M in additional funding for vertical flight research and development by the Pentagon, and hosted dozens on events around the world that have engaged thousands of engineers, innovators and technology experts in the civil and military VTOL community leading these transformative efforts in vertical flight.”

Today’s transformational developments in vertical flight are fueling a wide expansion of the industry and an increasingly imperative demand for talented engineers and innovators. As an educational society, VFS works to support the collaboration between industry, government and academia to help the industry’s need for innovative engineers and scientists, with a global network of student chapters, competitions, scholarships and pathways to internships and employment.

Largely as a consequence of these innovative new aircraft programs and the high demand for talent, the Society has experienced an impressive growth over the past two years of more than 12% in individual members, an increase in corporate members by one-third, and a doubling of its educational members.

VFS now has more than 5,500 individual members, with nearly 25% residing outside the United States; over 100 corporations, with 36% being non-US-owned companies; and 29 universities who have joined as educational members, with 42% being outside the US.

VFS corporate members include nearly every major helicopter original equipment manufacturer (OEM) and helicopter turboshaft engine producer in the world, as well as most major Tier 1 suppliers. In addition to established helicopter OEMs such as Airbus, Bell, Boeing, Leonardo and Sikorsky, more than two dozen new eVTOL innovators have joined VFS. Of the 100 total corporate members, a majority are working on various challenges associated with this new class of vertical flight aircraft and more than a quarter have publically acknowledged that they are developing eVTOL aircraft.

The Vertical Flight Society is recognized as a leader in supporting the global “Electric VTOL Revolution.” The Society’s sold-out 6th Annual Electric VTOL Symposium (being held next week in Mesa, Arizona in conjunction with the 8th Biennial VFS Autonomous VTOL Technical Meeting) is the world’s largest and longest-running event focusing on the incredible promise, progress and challenges of eVTOL aircraft. In addition, in 2017, the Society established the Electric VTOL News™ website, www.eVTOL.news, which catalogues all known eVTOL aircraft.

“We’ve reached a remarkable period of exciting new developments across the entire spectrum of vertical flight that is truly transformative,” said Hirschberg. “The Vertical Flight Society is working to support the development of innovative VTOL approaches that hold the promise to revolutionize military and civil air transportation. And this worldwide surge in disruptive new civil and military VTOL aircraft that can fly faster, quieter and cheaper than a conventional helicopter is driving the Society’s membership increases.”

The Vertical Flight Society also announces that it has added Rex Alexander, President of Five-Alpha LLC, as an advisor for VTOL infrastructure. Five-Alpha (5α) is a global consultancy dedicated to providing specialized education, training, insight and services in the very challenging and unique communities of helicopter and vertical lift infrastructure. Alexander was previously the Head of Aviation Infrastructure at Uber, the co-founder and co-owner of HeliExperts International LLC, and a past president and board member of the National EMS Pilots Association; he is also serving as the Infrastructure Working Group Co-Chair for the United States Helicopter Safety Team (USHST).

VFS was founded as the American Helicopter Society in 1943 by the visionaries of the early helicopter industry, who believed that technological cooperation and collaboration were essential to support this new type of aircraft. Today, history is repeating itself with VFS playing a similar role helping to advance today’s revolutionary VTOL aircraft.

Over the past 75 years, VFS — the world’s only membership organization that spans the global civil/military and manned/unmanned vertical flight community in industry, governments and academia — has played a key leadership role in advancing the industry. VFS holds the largest and longest-running vertical flight technical conference in the world and celebrates its Diamond Jubilee this year at the 75th Annual Forum & Technology Display, May 13-16, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: www.vtol.org/forum.

The Vertical Flight Society

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