



Press Release

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Vertical Flight Society Selects Angelo Collins as New Executive Director
Aerospace engineer Collins to lead organization starting June 1, 2023

Fairfax, Virginia, USA, March 7, 2023 — The Vertical Flight Society (VFS), the world’s leading non-profit organization working to advance vertical flight, today announces the selection of Angelo N. Collins as its executive director, effective June 1, 2023. Outgoing Executive Director Mike Hirschberg, who has led the organization for 12 years, will be staying on staff in a supporting role as Director of Strategy. Collins will be only the seventh leader of VFS in its 80-year history.

“Mike has done a fantastic job over the past 12 years,” said Tomasz Krysiniski, VFS Chair of the Board and chair of the selection committee, and the VP of Research and Innovation at Airbus Helicopters. “We are fully confident that Angelo will continue Society’s upward trajectory for years to come.”

VFS is the world’s only international non-profit dedicated to the advancement of vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) aircraft and technology. It was founded in 1943 as the American Helicopter Society, Inc. (AHS) 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 electric VTOL aircraft.

The Society is comprised of 6,500 individual members in industry, academia and government agencies worldwide, as well as 185 corporate members and 30 educational members. It rebranded as the Vertical Flight Society five years ago. On Feb. 25, 2023, VFS marked 80 years since it was founded.

“It has been the honor of my professional career to lead VFS since 2011,” said Hirschberg. “I have poured everything I could into expanding it into the Vertical Flight Society. Now it’s time to pass the baton to lead the Society into its next decade.”

The competitive process to select the new executive director was begun six months ago, when Hirschberg informed the Board of his intention to step down from the top position. Six highly qualified VFS members from around the world applied for the position, with the final candidates interviewed on March 6. The VFS Board’s Selection Committee was unanimous in its selection of Collins as best representing the Board’s strategic vision for the Society.

Collins, a member of VFS since 2008, is a distinguished leader and subject matter expert in the vertical flight industry, with 15 years of experience in aerospace engineering, project management and technical consulting, primarily related to vertical flight. Most recently, he has been serving as an aerospace engineer with Booz Allen Hamilton, managing the science and engineering technical assistance (SETA) support contract to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) Tactical Technology

Office (TTO). In this role, he supervised a team of 18 engineers and analysts supporting numerous cutting-edge technology initiatives. Collins has been supporting DARPA/TTO in various roles since starting as an engineering intern with CENTRA Technology, Inc. in 2008, when he was hired by Mike Hirschberg, then a principal engineer at CENTRA (now part of Amentum, Inc.).

Collins also served as the Science and Technology (S&T) Portfolio Manager and S&T Affordability Lead in the F-35 Joint Program Office, primarily responsible for oversight of S&T projects associated with development, production and sustainment for various systems, including the F135-PW-600 engine and Rolls-Royce LiftSystem for the short takeoff and vertical landing (STOVL) jet fighter.

As a SETA at DARPA, he supported numerous vertical flight-related programs, including Tern, Aircrew Labor In-Cockpit Automation System (ALIAS), Gremlins, DiscRotor, Mission Adaptive Rotor, Otter, Blackjack, Goblin, Angler, Silent Marauder and High-Speed VTOL. He also supported the Office of Naval Research (ONR) Autonomous Aerial Cargo/Utility System (AACUS) VTOL program.

In parallel, Collins served as a program manager for Skyworks Aeronautics on a part-time basis, leading a team of international engineers, analysts and lawyers in development of the Hawk 5 Gyroplane.

Collins was also the Administrative Chair of the first VFS Transformative Vertical Flight (TVF) Workshop, held at CENTRA headquarters in August 2014. This event, now held annually as the VFS Electric VTOL Symposium, was the world's first meeting of the emerging eVTOL pioneers.

"I am truly humbled by the opportunity to serve as the latest steward of the Society that I love so much," said Collins. "I appreciate the confidence that the Board of Directors has placed in me, and I look forward to serving the membership and expanding the global impact of VFS."

Collins has a B.S. in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Maryland (UMD) and an M.S. in Engineering Administration from Virginia Tech. He is the author/co-author of six technical papers (primarily at VFS events) and several articles in *Vertiflite*, the VFS membership magazine. He was a student of and co-author with then-UMD Prof. Gordon Leishman, winning a best paper award in 2011.

Collins is a native of the greater Boston, Massachusetts area but has lived and worked in Arlington, Virginia, for 14 years, where he resides with his wife Nicole, daughter Camila and son Loukas, with a third child expected soon.

VFS holds the largest and longest-running vertical flight technical conference in the world, which this year will be its 79th Annual Forum & Technology Display on May 16-18, 2023, in West Palm Beach, Florida, USA: www.vtol.org/forum. The leadership transition will be marked at the 79th Annual Grand Awards Ceremony on May 18.

VFS is @VTOLsociety on social media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Mastodon](#), [Twitter](#), [Vimeo](#) and [YouTube](#), and has @ElectricVTOL channels on [Facebook](#), [Mastodon](#) and [Twitter](#).

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