

# DEFENCE

## HELICOPTER



# Taking flight

Australia plots future course

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# Mi-17 training centre opens in Alabama



**A SIGNIFICANT EVENT WAS MARKED IN** mid-December outside the gates of the US Army Aviation School at Fort Rucker, Alabama, with the opening of the new Mi-17 Aircrew and Maintenance Training Complex.

Established by Concord XXI, the all-new facility utilises ICAO-approved methods to teach initial qualification, annual refresher and tailored training for aircrew and maintenance personnel on the Mi-17-series helicopter.

'Concord XXI is a partnership with five guys,' explained Eric Huppert, a director at the company, 'and all of us have been involved in the Mi-17 and Antonov training business since about 1999'

Huppert's own experience in the arena included serving as a former commander of USAF Special Operations Command's 6th Special Operations Squadron, a combat aviation advisory unit with the mission to assess, train, advise and assist foreign aviation forces in airpower employment, sustainment and force integration. Now retired, Huppert has expanded his relationship with Concord XXI over the past seven years.

'Over the last three years we have been exploring bringing the whole [Mi-17] simulator centre over here to the US, because I needed to make it mirror other western training programmes – making it look exactly like a US Army or USAF training school.'

Over the last four to five years the company has trained almost 1,000 Mi-17 pilots, flight engineers and maintenance officers from 'all over', including the US Army, USAF, RAF,

Canadian Forces and civilian companies.

'But we decided to put it over here because recently the US has started to train more and more, and they were tired of sending students overseas. Because of the amount of time that guys were spending overseas anyway [on

deployments] they wanted to keep them here in the US as much as possible, so we kind of capitalised on that thinking and decided to put it outside of Fort Rucker.'

According to company descriptions, the five modules that make up the new training complex have been developed over the last nine years with ICAO-approved syllabi that can be labelled and taught in Russian, English, Spanish or Dari. The result is a training system that meets or exceeds all OEM specifications for training aircrew and maintenance technicians on the Mi-17.

## MODULAR COURSE

The five modules consist of: computer-based training; full-colour, wall-hanging-sized systems illustrations; systems schematics boards; major component cutaways; and a cockpit procedures trainer (CPT) with a full-motion, FAA Level D-equivalent simulator.

'The ICAO-approved course syllabus is presented in chapter format with self-paced learning and exams at the completion of each section. The course is continuously updated with factory bulletins and lessons learned from users in the field,' said the company.

The CPT is described as fully automated and allows practice of all normal and abnormal checklists, and all 124 failure modes: 'The full motion dome-visuals simulator is equipped with an Afghan database, as well as a maritime and central European wooded database. The Level D-equivalent simulator allows practice of all manoeuvres, including

brownouts, IMC conditions, shipboard landings and rocket/guns firing.'

Huppert said that in developing the new facility, the company took a 5,550sq m warehouse and remodelled it into two 'purpose-built' large classrooms with CPTs in them.

'We will have up to about 20 students per classroom, as well as a separate simulator bay. One of the unique things about the sim bay is that we have a student lounge right on the other side of the wall from the simulator and we pipe the ongoing training mission right through the wall onto a big television screen, so that other students can watch and learn from what's going on inside the simulator.

'We will also have an Mi-17 maintenance trainer out at the facility,' he said. 'So as they are going through the course, they can have a morning classroom session and then in the afternoon go out into the hangar to take off a hydraulic pump or change a rotor blade, tyre or fuel control unit. It's not an airworthy Mi-17 but it serves as an excellent maintenance trainer.'

In terms of throughput, Huppert pointed to the maximum size of 20 students per class, but adds that a more ideal size would be about 15, adding that this will be either pilot, flight engineer or maintenance.

'What we like to do is run the aircrew together as a crew through the course – in other words, the pilot and flight engineer make up a crew. That's really how we prefer to run it, rather than having a flight engineer course and a pilot course – for all the obvious reasons.'

Asked about future growth plans, Huppert admitted that they exist, but quickly noted that they are 'under wraps' for now. 'But yes, we very definitely have future plans to expand. It appears that the FMS market may support that but there is a whole other dimension to that as well. Once we get this first year out of the way and hopefully are successful in what we are trying to do, then we may take steps to expand into some other avenues that are going to be pretty exciting I think.'

**By Scott R Gourley, Fort Rucker**