Kamov KA-32 transits New Zealand

ALTHOUGH it never entered the New Zealand register, a recent helicopter arrival at Ardmore generated a lot of interest. HL-9470 is a Russian built, South Korean operated, Kamov KA-32, flown and maintained by a Korean crew (2 pilots and 3 engineers) that had been operating in Indonesia and were on their way to Antarctica, where the aircraft was to be tasked with lifting, transport and SAR duties.

While here, the KA-32’s registration was changed from Indonesian, back to the Korean register, a process that required a visit from the KoreanCAA. Special permits had to be arranged for its flights in New Zealand.

Flightline Aviation ensured the international logistics handled by a Canadian company was a seamless operation once the helicopter reached New Zealand. Although the time frame was tight, Flightline’s Chris Barry and Teresa Kilian managed the process and once a meeting was held it became evident that additional assistance for communications, refueling and navigation would be required. There were also airport arrangements to be made for managing breakdowns and noise pollution concerns, as the Korean owners and crew were very keen to avoid upsetting anyone and to cast a good impression wherever they went.

This provided something of an unexpected bonus adventure for Flightline’s Ardmore demonstrator pilot Gary van der Westhuizen who took on the role of Safety Pilot, providing navigation and radio assistance while the aircraft was transiting New Zealand.

Gary and Chris met the KA-32 at Jellicoe wharf in an R44, the time was 08:30 and the Korea-based helicopter was scheduled to depart 10 minutes later.

Chris says he was very grateful for the eager assistance given by all the airport staff contacted. Feedback from the crew indicates that they were delighted with their time in New Zealand, in particular with the scenery they witnessed and the hospitality they received.

About the Kamov KA-32

The KA-32 is a civilian version of the KA-27 which was designed as a military helicopter for the Soviet Navy and first flew in 1973. Like other Kamov military helicopters, it utilises a co-axial rotor system, removing the need for a tail rotor. Depending on configuration, the aircraft can accommodate 2 crew and up to 16 passengers. It has a length of 11.3m, a height of 5.5m and a rotor diameter of 15.8m. (That’s about 37’, 18 and 52 feet respectively).

Power comes from two 2200shp engines, the KA-32 is capable of lifting 5500kg on the hook and has a maximum speed of 145kts. On paper, it is big, but that is most evident when standing alongside (or climbing into) it. No wonder that crowds of onlookers arrived at every NZ stop. The KA-32 crew are very proud of their aircraft and welcomed many visitors for a closer look.

More information

For more information on the KA-32 visit, or Flightline Aviation’s broad range of capabilities, contact Chris Barry. Phone: 09 295 0859, Mobile: 021 844 496, Email: chris.barry@flightline.co.nz, or visit www.flightline.co.nz

Not a normal day at the office

Gary van der Westhuizen is a B Cat Instructor at Ardmore Helicopters and recently picked up the role of Domestic Pilot for Flightline Aviation, based just across the field. He never thought that would lead to becoming a Co-Pilot on a Kamov KA-32. Gary writes of his role in the KA-32’s NZ transit as follows:

WITH A combination of broken English, hand signals and an R44 leading the way, we made our way to Ardmore from the Port of Auckland with not too much difficulty, and were welcomed by a small crowd with almost everyone taking photos. In fact we had quite a few spectators at every stop we made. I suppose it’s not every day that a Russian built helicopter, with a Korean crew is navigated by a South African making radio calls in New Zealand. It’s what you might call a communication adventure.

After a few days of paperwork and after test flying with the Korean CAA, we planned to make our way to Christchurch via Palmerston North and Woodbourne. From Christchurch, the helicopter would fly to Lyttelton and then sail for Antarctica to assist research teams with transport and Search and Rescue operations. We needed to make a few stops due to the thirsty nature of this machine, burning about 800 litres per hour. Each of the two engines produces 2200 shp, allowing us to cruise at 130 kts which was surprising for a helicopter with an AUF of 11000 kg.

How it Works

The controls work the same as they do in any other helicopter, but with a small difference. There is a button on the cyclic that you push, as you also pull a lever attached to the collective which locks it in place. This activates the hydraulic system and makes the controls feel slightly heavier compared to the way they feel in an R44 for example.

To move into forward flight once you have selected your power setting, you release the lever on the cyclic when you stay in balance. This activates the rotor system, reducing the need for a tail rotor. Yaw is achieved by increasing or decreasing collective, but as you also push a lever attached to the cyclic and move it in the opposite direction, the pedals work the same way as normal, but are just a little less effective than a helicopter with a tail rotor. Yaw is achieved by increasing the pitch on one rotor and decreasing it on the other, thereby producing more torque in one direction. The pedals also move the big vertical stabilisers which can be adjusted to make sure you stay in balance.

To descend, you pull a lever attached to the cyclic and move it (or climbing into) it. No wonder that crowds of onlookers arrived at every NZ stop. The KA-32 crew are very proud of their aircraft and welcomed many visitors for a closer look.

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