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February 9, 2011

Cougar Helicopters Responds to Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB) Accident Report

Cougar Helicopters Inc. (Cougar) has received the TSB Report regarding Flight CHI91, March 12, 2009.

The release of the Report again reminds us of the tragedy and the loss of crew and passengers and the terrible impact of the accident on families and friends. As we address the TSB Report, our thoughts and prayers are with them.

Cougar will be reviewing the Report and its supporting documentation in detail and will refrain from commenting upon it until that review is complete. However, Cougar believes it is important to summarize its post accident activities.

Post Accident Activities Summary

Following the accident, Cougar voluntarily stood down its S92 helicopter operations in St. John's and initiated its own analysis of the accident.

Cougar's analysis of the accident has determined that the cause of the accident was the manufacturer's design of the main gear box (MGB) filter bowl assembly and lubrication system, combined with incomplete and inadequate information from the manufacturer regarding the MGB and related emergency procedures. The root cause of the accident was the fracture of two MGB oil filter bowl titanium studs, which allowed for the displacement of the oil filter and the rapid loss of lubricating oil causing the loss of tail rotor drive. These failures resulted in a catastrophic loss of flight control which could not be overcome by the flight crew.

Cougar has now installed on its S92 fleet the redesigned MGB, attachment studs and oil filter which addresses the root cause of the accident. Cougar has also enhanced its related maintenance planning and quality assurance procedures.

Cougar has cooperated in a mandatory post-accident review of its operations by Transport Canada as well as post-accident audits conducted by its customers. It has participated actively in the Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry established by the Canada Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board.

Having put in place all necessary corrective procedures, Cougar developed a return to service plan in conjunction with its customers.

After the accident Sikorsky initiated its own investigation and introduced a series of voluntary and mandatory changes to the S92 helicopter, in conjunction with the FAA and Transport Canada, as follows:

1. Sikorsky changed the MGB oil filter bowl studs from titanium to a stronger steel alloy stud which has a proven track record on the Blackhawk helicopter;
2. The FAA issued a statement to the industry withdrawing the pre-accident publication by Sikorsky of proposed changes to the MGB Emergency Procedures contained in the Rotorcraft Flight Manual (RFM);
3. Sikorsky redesigned the MGB oil filter bowl assembly as a more robust component with improved regular maintenance;
4. Sikorsky changed the inspection and maintenance procedures for the MGB and oil filter bowl;
5. Sikorsky redesigned the MGB housing including an increase from a 3 to 6 stud arrangement to fasten the oil filter bowl to the MGB housing;
6. Sikorsky has confirmed that the S92 does not have a 30 minute run dry MGB and has provided additional information and clarification regarding the MGB certification under FAR 29.927 2(c), MGB, and the nature and meaning of MGB failure indications; and
7. Sikorsky has issued FAA and Transport Canada approved revisions to the Emergency Procedures section of the S92 RFM regarding the MGB, MGB pre-failure indicators and the pilot response to MGB pre-failure indicators.

Cougar has updated its Emergency Check List for the S92 with the concurrence of Transport Canada, based on the improved manufacturer information. The changes to the S92 RFM and

Emergency Check List have been integrated into Cougar's pilot training and cockpit resource management program.

Cougar continues to work proactively with its customers to improve flight and operations protocols and communications including passenger briefings.

Cougar's return to service of its S92 fleet in St. John's was based on our confidence that Sikorsky had addressed the core issues exposed by the accident in conjunction with the FAA and Transport Canada.

Cougar is satisfied by Sikorsky's prompt and voluntary ownership of the changes required to address issues arising out of the accident and its cooperative approach to addressing the concerns of Cougar, its customers and the other operators of the S92 helicopter fleet around the world. Cougar is confident in the improved design and increased robustness of the S92 MGB and the airworthiness of the S92 helicopter.

In cooperation with its customers and regulators, Cougar has reviewed its operations to ensure it continues to provide safe and reliable helicopter services to the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore industry.

Cougar Helicopters Inc.

Hank Williams
General Manager

Media Enquiries:
Candace Moakler
Phone: (709) 758-4041
E-Mail: cmoakler@cougar.ca