

Airbus granted Design Organisation Approval by JCAB

Kobe, Japan, 29 October 2026 – Airbus Helicopters in Japan has been granted Design Organisation Approval (DOA) by the Japan Civil Aviation Bureau (JCAB), establishing Airbus as the first and only foreign helicopter OEM authorised to perform all design activities across its complete fleet of aircraft in the country.

Under this approval, JCAB now accepts Airbus engineering designs based on the established European Union Safety Agency (EASA) Part 21 framework. This reflects the deep trust and close working relationship between the Japanese aviation authority and Airbus, enabling a smoother, more efficient customisation process.

Covering all Airbus helicopter models operating in Japan, including the next-generation H160 and heavy-lift H225, the DOA grants Airbus delegation authority to design, manufacture, inspect and approve specialised Supplemental Type Certificate kits and complex structural modifications tailored directly to Japanese mission requirements.

"Securing the DOA from the JCAB is a defining moment that reinforces our deep, 65-year commitment to the Japanese aviation industry," said Jean-Luc Alfonsi, Managing Director of Airbus Helicopters Japan. "By integrating Airbus' standards based on EASA Part 21's for design, production and maintenance with JCAB's under one roof at our Kobe centre of excellence, we are expanding local engineering autonomy and capabilities. Most importantly, it empowers us to respond with speed, returning customised aircraft to service faster so that operators can carry out their missions without delay."

For helicopter operators across Japan, the DOA significantly streamlines operational workflows and shortens turnaround times. Previously, custom aircraft modifications involved a multi-stage application process alongside scheduled on-site witnessing of ground and flight tests by authority officials. Under the DOA framework, together with its existing Production Organisation Approval (POA) and Maintenance Organisation Approval (MOA), Airbus now holds a comprehensive set of airworthiness approvals. This gives Airbus full internal autonomy to design, manufacture, inspect, and flight test modifications entirely in-house, returning customised aircraft to active service faster.

Airbus is the only foreign OEM in Japan providing complete, end-to-end local helicopter solutions. With a team of 400 specialists based in Tokyo and Kobe, the company provides aircraft completion, maintenance, engineering, technical support, training, and spare parts sales at its centre of excellence in Kobe. Expanded in 2020, the Kobe facility can accommodate up to 40 medium-sized helicopters simultaneously, with capacity to handle over 80 major MRO and modification projects annually.

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(Left to right) Daisuke Umezawa, Director General, West Japan Civil Aviation Bureau, Olivier Andre, Head of Operations, Airbus Helicopters Japan, Julien Hocquette, Head of Engineering Asia, Airbus Helicopters Japan, Katsushi Miki, Head of Quality, Airbus Helicopters Japan

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