

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 Korean owned, near new 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 Korean CAA. 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 Killian 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 downwash 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 plan being that the Korean pilots (Commander Lee and Captain Cho) could develop a working relationship with Gary while they followed the R44 back to Ardmore. As it turned out, English was

easily understood and spoken quite well despite an understandable lack of confidence from the crew regarding radio work. Gary's time with the helicopter is a story in itself (see article alongside).

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.) Powered by 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: 021 844 490. Email: chris.barry@flightline.co.nz, or visit www.flightline.co.nz



Kamov KA-32: Russian built, South Korean operated, Canadian managed, and in NZ on its way to Antarctica.

Gavin Conroy picture

Not a normal day at the office

Contributed by Gary van der Westhuizen

Gary van der Westhuizen is a B-Cat Instructor at Ardmore Helicopters and recently picked up the role of Demonstrator 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 knots which was surprising for a helicopter with an AUW 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 while sitting in the hover. 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 collective (which locks it in place) and then release the button on the cyclic when you reach your desired speed (to keep it in that position). There is still some movement

available in both controls if small adjustments are needed.

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.

So manoeuvring the helicopter is not that difficult - you just have to get used to sitting a lot higher than you normally would in the hover. This is because you're already about six feet off the ground before the helicopter has left it.

The Trip South

The Korean crew were amazed with our New Zealand scenery, taking pictures and video as we made our way down the country. I don't blame them - I'm still amazed at how beautiful this country is. We had some good weather on the way and the trip was heaps of fun, though we did encounter some slightly less desirable weather as we got closer to Woodbourne. We tracked down the east coast to Christchurch where after just over five hours of flying we made our final landing. Thanks to HeliPro who kindly made a suitable spot available for us to land. We shook hands and said our farewells to go our separate ways, since I had a flight to catch back to Auckland. That flight back took just over an hour on the big plane, but when I think about it I would much rather have the five hour adventure again than a one hour nap.

A big thanks to the entire crew of the Kamov - it was an honour to fly with you. Thanks to the Air Traffic Controllers at Palmerston North, Woodbourne and Christchurch who really made the trip go smoothly and gave a helping hand wherever they could. Also to the ground crews who made sure we landed in the right spot, to the Fuel Tanker guys who kept our tanks full, and to everyone at Flightline who helped make the day possible.

What a trip!



3 Engineers go to work each time the aircraft stops. Note the scale of the rotorhead.



Chris Barry (left) and Gary at Ardmore.



KA-32 cockpit, pilot side on the left.



Co-axial rotorhead componentry.



It didn't take long to draw a crowd at each stop on the way.