



EDITORIAL

We're no strangers to paradoxes!

Hello everyone,

1) UFH's Perspective

Sometimes, improving safety is a convenient excuse.

In its newsletter of April 29th, the UFH (French Helicopter Association) addressed the obstacles to simplifying European regulations resulting from political intervention, sparking its usual flurry of reactions.

In this instance, it was simply commenting on the conclusions of the EASA Joint Rule Simplification Board meeting dedicated to this topic. Its members had indeed discussed the pressure exerted by the European Commission on the pace and content of regulatory work. It's fair to ask whether this pressure is always solely motivated by the desire to improve the technical management of safety.

Let's take the example of reactions following an accident.

When the technical investigation of an aviation incident leads to a recommendation addressed to local authorities or stakeholders directly involved in the incident (manufacturer, operator, local airport control, for example) inviting them to issue an Airworthiness Directive (AD), a service bulletin, or to correct an operations manual or procedure, the follow-up to the event falls under the application of existing regulations.

If, on the other hand, an aviation accident triggers a regulatory task, with, when the EASA is concerned, the EPAS, the BIS (Best Intervention Strategy), and the drafting of a NPA, the follow-up to the event will modify the regulatory framework. This can be entirely legitimate. This may be the case when a new risk emerges or when the technical investigation does indeed raise a regulatory issue that needs to be resolved. This is the case when the analysis shows that the interpretation of a text is uncertain, that provisions prove to be inapplicable, incompatible, or even dangerous. One can mention, for example, the existence of requirements or restrictions under non-aeronautical regulations, which hinder the conditions for carrying out training.

Conversely, the technical handling of the aftermath of an accident can sometimes be impacted by non-technical considerations, such as a media campaign, legal action, or political intervention. In such cases, there is a tendency to push authorities to impose restrictions or constraints aimed not at correcting the shortcomings revealed by the incident, but at eliminating the circumstances surrounding it.

The handling of the accident in London on January 16, 2013, in which a helicopter collided with a crane due to poor visibility, is a striking example. Before the experts tasked with the technical investigation to reconstruct the sequence of events had even begun their work, opinion leaders, readily spurred on by the media, were already calling for stricter legislation to restrict urban overflights to public service missions only, or even to replace them with drones.

Before it was known whether a technical problem, faulty procedures, or improper implementation had led to the London tragedy, calls in France were made for a law closing access to the Paris heliport to all non-state traffic.

From that moment on, while the safety and peace of mind of citizens were being invoked to justify the gradual restriction of helicopter service to Paris, there was a willingness to grant EVOLs all the exemptions to basic air safety principles so that this new vertical mobility could be ready for the Paris Olympic Games.

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2) SNEH's Perspective

The companies, as the basics of VFR, expressly recommend that their crews look outside as much as possible to avoid bird strikes, collisions with other aircraft, or with fixed obstacles, particularly during low-altitude flights, landing, and takeoff.

The Authority, for its part, mandated, for safety reasons, that helicopters performing emergency medical transport missions (EMS) must have a crew of two people, or two pairs of eyes.

However, strangely enough, it opened the airspace to the "blind" drones, leaving it to manned aircraft and birds to prevent collisions with drones.

A true paradox!

One can legitimately question the conclusions of the risk analysis the Authority must have conducted to authorize these flights.

Is it really reasonable to require a crew carrying out emergency rescue, firefighting, medical transport, as well as aerial surveillance and work missions, to manage the risk posed by the presence of drones using only the mobile phone number of a remote pilot, hoping that the pilot will answer before commencing or continuing their mission?

The risk of collision with drones has been identified by the SNEH (French National Association of Helicopter Operators) since their introduction into service, and the Authority has been alerted on numerous occasions, particularly after collisions with helicopters abroad.

We are finally pleased to see the DGAC (French Civil Aviation Authority) initiating a working group on U-Space drones, of which the SNEH is an active member.

This group met for the first time on April 1st, and we hope that its work will quickly lead to a drastic reduction in the risk of collision with drones.

Sincerely,

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