

Night and Day

The Eurocopter airframe, at least, is proving popular elsewhere in Europe. Last August, Bavaria's Ministry of the Interior ordered eight new Eurocopter EC135 P2i for the state police helicopter squadron. Its aircraft are slated for delivery between September 2009 and April 2010.

The French Gendarmerie has already begun training on its new EC135. The first three of 15 EC135 T2s have been delivered to the Gendarmerie unit at Villacoublay, near Paris. The ships have the Wescam MX-15 EO/IR turret, SX-16 searchlight and ECS broadcasting system.

Capt. Pierre Faure, commander of the Villacoublay unit, said that crews were training on type and will begin operations in June. "The EC135 delivers much greater capability for us, particularly with an 800-kilogram payload improvement over the old Ecureuil. The improvements in the MX-15 over the old Sagem system are like comparing night with day."