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THE ROTARY WING SOCIETY OF INDIA

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Participating Society of Aeronautical Society of India (AeSI) and Affiliated to Helicopter Association International (HAI), American Helicopter Society and International Federation of Helicopter Association (IFHA).

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CITATION

Phenomenal Contribution by Indian Civil Helicopter Operators to Disaster Relief Operations, Uttarakhand, India

On the 16-17 Jun 2013, a massive tragedy struck the hill state of Uttarakhand in India. A massive cloud burst accompanied with torrential rains hammered the fragile ecosystem of the Hills. This resulted in massive deluges, landslides, swollen rivers, et.al. In this was caught a sea of humanity comprising of pilgrims, Hindu pundits, transporters (taxi & bus operators), hoteliers, natives, and shop keepers, with numbers running into thousands.

Within 48 hours of the event Flash Floods in the State of Uttarakhand on 15-17 Jun 13, there were nearly 85 helicopters from Military & Civil which were mobilised to carry out Massive Air Relief Operations.

Some 16-18 odd civil helicopters which were already present in the state for the seasonal pilgrimage were requisitioned to provide the immediate succour. These were the civil helicopters that provided the first response to rescue of those stranded in Uttarakhand flash floods. As the days progressed, more civil helicopters got requisitioned for Uttarakhand Disaster Relief. By the end of the Relief effort; approx 40 civil helicopters were involved in evacuating survivors and delivering sacks of food to makeshift helipads.

The civil helicopter fleet present in the state at the time of the disaster were mainly single engine helicopters. They were best suited for the Rescue & Relief work in narrow valleys. Every pilot involved in the mission, operated their machines to the fringes of their limits by landing and picking up passengers from ad hoc landing spots on the side of mountains under marginal weather conditions, many of the landing spots were just adequate to accommodate the skids. Flying single pilot, the pilots had a Herculean task to manage the crowd at

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Helicopters Save Lives

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helipads and yet operate safely. Most of the pilots flew dawn to dusk. By 23 Jun 13, the Civil & Military helicopters deployed for Rescue & Relief work had air-lifted more than 20,000 people to safety. These helicopters also transported over 500 tonnes of aid during the short period.

This massive task much beyond the call of duty was made possible by owners of Civil Helicopter companies who released their helicopters for handling the Rescue & Relief effort at Uttarakhand State. The pilots who contributed to the relief efforts included Capt Unnikrishnan and Capt Sudeep of Prabhatam, Capt Dadhwal of Pawan Hans, Capt Parminder and Capt Chauhan of Himalayan Heli Services, Capt Bakshi of Pinnacle Air, Capt Sanjeev Dubey of Aryan Aviation, Capt Bhupinder of Summit Aviation, Capt Bhatnagar and Capt PJ Singh of Prem Air, Capt S Paliwal and Capt JS Dhaliwal of Trans Bharat Aviation, Capt R Lal and Capt A Pandey of UT Air, Capt R Dua of Deccan Charters, Capt AK Garg and Capt HCS Gulati of Span Air, Capt SK Jana, Capt Sucharita and Capt Arpit of India Fly Safe, Capt S Solenkey and Capt Ravinder Singh of Escorts Aviation, Capt KS Shekhawat of Bajaj and Capt UC Yadav of MP Govt. Other pilots who contributed to the effort belonged to Jharkhand Govt, Global Vectra, GMR Aviation, Air Charters and Pargya Group.

The phenomenal Contribution by Indian Civil Helicopter Operators to Disaster Relief Operations in Uttarakhand, India is a classic example of the practical application of a vertical flight aircraft for humanitarian service. I therefore recommend Captain William J. Kossler, USCG Award may be considered for Indian Civil Helicopter Operators for their contribution to search and rescue operations in Uttarakhand India. This unprecedented and prompt response has already been recorded as the largest relief operation ever by helicopters in the world in recent times.