



AGUSTAWESTLAND COOL ON DEVELOPMENT OF 10.5T HELICOPTER

News / Manufacturer



AgustaWestland has dismissed the likelihood of an imminent launch of a new **10.5t-class helicopter**

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despite previous indications from its parent company that such a move would be a strategic priority.

The Anglo-Italian manufacturer has a gap in its range between the 8.3t AW189 and 15.6t AW101, and in January this year owner Finmeccanica identified the development of a new platform to fill that space as a part of the group's industrial plan.

However, Roberto Garavaglia, senior vice-president for strategy and business development at AgustaWestland, says market conditions are not conducive to a launch.

"This is clearly an area where we don't have a product. We would be able to make it, but it's a matter of prioritising what we need to do and looking at the reality of the market today," he says.

"We would look more carefully at market opportunities before making any significant commitment. Our dear friends in Marignane have decided not to launch the [Airbus Helicopters] X6, but to study the X6. We commit to the same."

That reference is a nod to the announcement in June by Marignane-headquartered Airbus Helicopters that it was beginning a two-year concept evaluation phase for a new rotorcraft in the 11t weight range. The X6 is planned as an eventual successor to the Airbus H225, but would clearly compete against any possible offering from AgustaWestland.

Garavaglia says although it is "looking at different options in the civil market", before any product launch AgustaWestland would need to better understand the sector, the potential funding available from its parent, and the technology "enablers" it could bring to the programme.

"This is not a great moment for the market but this is exactly the moment when you think about what needs to be next," he says.

With the 4.5t AgustaWestland AW169 now certificated – first delivery to an undisclosed VIP customer has also quietly taken place – development activities are confined to the AgustaWestland AW609 tiltrotor and the AW109 Trekker, an iterative programme that adds skid gear to its existing light twin.

The latter will offer "aggressive economics", says Garavaglia, including a useful load of 1.5t.

"It has a very interesting useful load for civil and utility operators. It is a pretty interesting value proposition."

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