



GERMANY GROUNDS MERKEL'S HELICOPTER AFTER FATAL NORWAY CRASH

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The German Defence Ministry decided on Friday to ground the three Airbus Cougar AS532 helicopters used to transport Chancellor Angela Merkel, after a Europe-wide grounding of the civilian version of the aircraft, a ministry spokesman said.

An Airbus H225 Super Puma helicopter ferrying passengers from a Norwegian oil platform operated by Statoil crashed on April 29, killing all 13 people on board as the main rotor blades separated from the aircraft.

In response to the accident, the European Aviation Safety Authority (EASA) grounded Airbus H225 LP and AS332 L2 Super Puma helicopters on Thursday following the discovery of metal fatigue in the gearbox of the crashed helicopter.

Germany operates three modified versions of the Cougar AS 532 for government and state purposes. The grounding will remain in place while the underlying issue is examined, the spokesman said.

The German newspaper Die Welt reported that German police would continue to operate other Airbus helicopters since they are a different model.

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SOURCE: REUTERS

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