**AUK PROTECTION READY FOR TAKE OFF**

***Swedish helicopter pilots team up with designers to launch personal equipment brand: “designed and developed by active aircrews”.***

**Jämtland, Sweden**

The day is hectic for Johan Baumann, co-founder and head of sales at AUK Protection. The last couple of weeks he’s been wrapping up the launch of the G1 and G2 flight suits, the brands’ first items to hit the market, while also doing aerial work with an AS350 off the coast of northern Norway.

“I think I’ve been talking to at least a hundred people the last few days” he says over coffee at the office he shares with a bunch of designers, a couple of cooks and a gunsmith. “But it’s cool, we’re getting great feedback from pilots all over the world. It looks like our flight suits are really making a difference out there”.

“Like with the rest of our product development, we’ve been taking it really slow” he says. “Every single detail on these flight suits have been evaluated up to five times by crews working in really diverse environments, so I’m pretty certain we’ve got something that will make a lot of colleagues happy”.

**Challenging traditions**

AUK Protection was founded back in 2012 when pilots Johan Baumann and Michael Elmeskog teamed up with top design consultants to develop better personal safety equipment for helicopter professionals. Focusing on head and body protection, i.e. helmets and garments, their aim is to bring technology and user centered design to a community that they feel has been ignored by suppliers.

“We were just really frustrated with the lack of quality and design in essential equipment, especially helmets” says Johan. “I mean, anyone familiar with operating helicopters knows that the slightest mistake can have really terrifying consequences, and yet there has been no development, or even discussion, on what flight crews should be wearing to perform better.”

**User centered flight suits**

The G1 & G2 flightsuits, a summer and a winter model, are decidedly different from the stiff canvas coveralls traditionally worn by helicopter crews. Instead, renowned high performance fabrics such as Cordura™ and Schoeller™ underscore the sleek, purposeful design. The concept rests on a long series of studies on the movement patterns during flight control and maintenance.

“It’s when you actually wear it that you notice the difference, especially in seated, flight control position” Johan says. “Small details like the inner wrist seams have been reversed so that nothing bothers your sense of control, and there are special stretch panels that aid the quick reaching or awkward leaning that we sometimes do on the job”.

“It might sound odd to some people, but we’ve even added something we call the ‘vertical reference strap’” Johan says. “It’s simply a quick adjustment that allows the pilot to tighten the fabric around the upper arm so that it doesn’t block your line of sight so much. Sometimes we’re slinging heavy stuff to people on the ground in really bad conditions, and a small detail like that might actually make a huge difference in safety”.

**Slow cooking**

According to Johan, response from the local helicopter community has been overwhelming so far, and orders were coming in long before the first products were off the drawing board. Things are obviously revving up for the small Jämtland firm. “This is just the beginning, and we’re still keeping it pretty low key” Johan says. “We’re on a mission to set things right, and I personally believe that thoughtful development and close relationships with our customers will pay off in the end”.