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THE SKY'S THE LIMIT WITH BSP'S SAV

EVER since the establishment, commitment and perseverance of Brunei Shell Petroleum Sdn Bhd in the country in 1891 that led to the first commercial discovery of oil and gas 38 years later to pave the way for the modernisation and progress, BSP has continued to successively raise the bar in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, and perhaps most importantly, safety.

One such way in which BSP has ably conquered new heights came in 1962 with the inception of its very own dedicated aviation department, known as the Shell Aviation Department, SAV that took to the skies in service and support of its umbrella organisation.

Captain Mark Pellow, Head of Aircraft Services shared in some of the highlights of its pioneering history right up to its current expansion plans and way forward for the future.

"The development of air transport was driven by the need to service the oil in Brunei. The first aircraft to be operated in the area following the Second World War was a Vicker Supermarine Type 309 Sea Otter, which was operated from an airstrip in Lutong, Sarawak by the Sarawak Oilfield Ltd that was also a subsidiary of Shell International Co. This was an amphibian aircraft which landed regularly on the Belait River in Kuala Belait."

Sitting in the Conference Room of the well-maintained SAV office in Anduki, one is completely surrounded by old black and white photographs of the department's pioneering days that hang proudly on its walls, immersing any visitors with its distinguished timeline since they first took to the skies. The fact that this treasure trove of history is maintained and well-documented further serves as venerable testimony not just to BSP but also to the host country that it serves.

"The Anduki Airfield, with its initial grass airstrip was constructed between 1949 and 1950 with the first landing by the Sea Otter made on May 28, 1951," pointed out Captain Pellow, as he then took on a pictorial tour of the fleet of aircraft that the SAV has operated, including helicopters, right up to the present day.

Beginning with the Percival P50 Prince, the first of the twin turboprop aircraft arrived in Lutong in 1950, followed by a second that arrived in Brunei to operate from Anduki until 1958. They were then replaced by the Beech 90 and Beech 99 aircraft that began operating in 1968. The Beech 90 was a nine-seater executive aircraft whilst the Beech 99 a 19-seater commuter aircraft.

The Auster J5B Autocar was a small, single-engined four-seater monoplane built in the 1940s that operated from Anduki between 1952 and 1958. Registered as VR-UDO, it was used for a variety of oil support activities. SAV operated two more amphibian aircraft, known as the Short Sealand aircraft out of Anduki between 1954 to 1968.

Captain Pellow then explained that "rotorcraft operations first began in 1958 as oil was discovered offshore it became necessary to move personal and equipment to the offshore platforms by air", adding "During the early helicopter support of BSP's offshore operation activities was carried out by the Sikorsky S55 'Whirlwind' helicopter that was operated under contract by Worldwide Helicopters, as well as the Sikorsky S61 'Sea King' helicopter in the mid-60s."

SAV first started operating its own helicopters in 1966, when it purchased a single-engine, seven-seater, light utility Aerospatiale Alouette 3 helicopter. It was not until 1967 that the first of the large twin engine Sikorsky S61N 'Sea King' helicopter was delivered and commenced operations.

The top pilot went on to highlight that "along with five other Sikorsky S61Ns, they have achieved numerous awards for the SAV including the Aerospace Industry Achievement Award presented during the Asian Aerospace Exhibition in Singapore in February 1994, the award for the finalist in the Business and General Category in Flight International's Aerospace Industry Award in 1998 and the winner for the Business and General Aviation category in Flight Aerospace Industry Awards.

On March 25, 1999, SAV was awarded an Air Operator Certificate by the country's Department of Civil Aviation that allowed SAV to operate commercial flights. "SAV continued to operate the Sikorsky S61N until February 2007 before it was replaced by three Sikorsky S92 helicopters, one of the most advanced helicopters in the market," Captain Pellow stated.

Fast forwarding to SAV's current modernisation programme, aside from the opening up of four more cadet helicopter pilot positions later this year, Captain Pellow listed out the other publicly less-known focus areas.

"SAV is planning to offer four positions as cadet pilots. The first two will go for their course commencing in September this year and the second batch of the other two will be attending their course, which is scheduled to begin sometime in May 2013.

"But aside from these, there is also our Hangar Modernisation Project, which once completed, will arguably be one of the most advanced commercial helicopter hangars in the region. Furthermore, with the completion of the tarmac runway at Anduki Airfield, SAV will have completed a further upgrade of Instrument Approach or using the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) for safer approaches to its runway. There is also the further potential development for long line operations with the Sikorsky S92 helicopter with, as just one example, emphasis on Search and Rescue. SAV is aiming to be search and rescue capable which will further improve its overall capabilities in its current operations. There is also the fleet optimisation that means the high possibility of the fleet's expansion either with the present type or different type of helicopters. Finally, we have the Third Party sharing agreements that have already been initiated, which helps with cost recovery at BSP by lowering operating and production costs, plus keeps money in the country and allows for greater opportunities to train Bruneian pilots and engineers."

Safety is always the paramount feature in all of BSP's undertakings. So how does SAV maintain its safety record to earn those top accolades for having the best safety record in aviation in the whole of the Shell Global Group? "We do that with an effective Safety Management System. Knowing the hazards, assessing them and determining the correct mitigation for each potential hazard is the best way. Also ensuring that the highest levels of safety standards are achieved and acknowledging safety is and will always remain the number one priority in all of SAV activities."

Looking further over the horizon, Captain Pellow shared that SAV will be looking at eventually upgrading its Hangar facilities that would allow for focussed maintenance planning activities being able to be carried out well into the evening, which would increase overall aircraft availability and produce higher levels of aircraft serviceability.

"There is also the implementation of the GNSS, or Area Navigation, Instrument Approach capability, which would improve the overall safety and create greater capability as well as ability to produce oil and the ability to operate safely in adverse weather conditions. In addition, there is also going to be the introduction of Vertical Reference, which is a helicopter technique that would improve our delivery of vital equipment offshore

and reduce overall cost of oil production. This Vertical Reference can also be used for Aerial Fire Fighting and Aerial Construction, which is a common but specialised activity used elsewhere in the world that would, however, be a first for Brunei," said Captain Pellow. "By developing Bruneians even further in the direction of offshore flying, vertical reference, Search and Rescue in medium and heavy aircraft and by expanding their capability in the region BSP will create internationally-recognised professionals in the field of helicopter operations."

He went on to point out that "further expansion of our maintenance capabilities at Anduki will be sought from the European Aviation Safety Agency in an effort to lower operating costs of BSP aircraft and the build up of in-house specialists capable of completing advanced Composite repairs, Aircraft Float Repairs, advanced sheet metal work and aircraft brake assembly overhaul. This, in turn, would allow BSP to train Bruneian crews and operate latest technology Aircraft, both in the Heavy and Medium categories."

The chief pilot further explained that by initiating all these projects, it would "help reduce exposure to airmen, mariners and offshore passengers by providing Search and Rescue capability overwater in both day and night conditions, thus enhancing the level of safety in the region".

The other key future projects that the SAV is embarking on include "opening key management positions at SAV, providing additional exposure for pilots and engineers will be completed by assigning Bruneians to overseas positions to gain best practice and aircraft sharing in the Southeast Asian region for cost recovery and experience building for Bruneian crews".

Since 1951, SAV at Anduki has operated a vast array of 23 different fixed and rotary aircraft, in addition to six contracted rotary wing aircraft. Since 1966, the fleet at Anduki have flown 182,890 flying hours and made 876,756 successful landings, transporting over four million passengers to achieve the highest safety standard of zero accidents. Over the last two decades, the department introduced enhanced airfield facilities and has been awarded Air Safety Awards, whilst continuing on with its successful implementation of recruiting and training Bruneians both on the ground and in the air.

The Anduki Airfield and its aircraft have made a significant contribution to aviation in Brunei with a 61-year period of operational support and achievement as well as contributing to the exploration and production effort in the deep offshore waters of Brunei, which has added further value to the enhancement of reserves and production of which Bruneians now make up a high percentage of the BSP Aviation Department staff, both on the ground and in the air.

In June 2011, a new modern terminal was opened at Anduki replacing the 1989 terminal that stands as fitting testament to the Anduki success story that has resulted in the fact that "BSP is the only Shell-operated company with its own in-house operated aviation fleet", emphasised Captain Pellow and that "as exploration moves into increasingly deeper waters, the future of Anduki and its aircraft is very bright indeed".

ENDS.

Notes to Editors: Brunei Shell Petroleum Company Sdn Bhd (BSP) should be referred as BSP or Brunei Shell Petroleum for abbreviation or headline purposes. Brunei Shell Petroleum Company Sdn Bhd's activity is primarily for the exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas from onshore and offshore fields. The Government of Brunei Darussalam and a company in the Royal Dutch Shell Group of Companies each owns a 50% stake in BSP.