Wind Tunnel Measurement Of Aerodynamic Characteristics Of A Generic Eurocopter Helicopter

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EXPERIMENTAL aerodynamic studies on a generic model of the helicopter by Eurocopter France, was based on a prototype of the 350Z model. Figure 1(a) shows the actual 350Z prototype and the generic scaled down model in Figure 1(b) respectively.

The model was equipped with a high torque motor that can rotate the main rotor up to 900rpm during wind-on conditions but with no tail rotor [1]. The model had been tested at the UTM-LST on March 2008.

UTM-LST is a closed circuit-return type tunnel with a test section of 2m (width) x 1.5m (height) x 5.8m (length), and a maximum wind speed of 80m/s. In this aerodynamic investigation, both tunnels used short blade configuration for the main rotor blade. The short blade is 0.25m in radius, which is one-third the original blade length.

TEST DESCRIPTION

The aerodynamic load test using the external 6-component balance has capability to determine the aerodynamic loads, namely, three forces (lift, drag and side) and three moments (pitching, yawing and rolling). The Balance Moment Centre (BMC) for this balance is at the centre of the wind tunnel test section. Figure 2 depicts the installed model during testing at UTM-LST.

The aerodynamic loads obtained are then normalised to a non-dimensional with dynamic pressure and area. The reference area taken for this normalisation is m² where m is the main rotor radius.

(i) Reynolds Sweep

To select the appropriate test speed, a Reynolds sweep needs to be conducted to determine at what velocity the aerodynamic coefficients, i.e. drag coefficient, become stable or independent of velocity. For this, a Reynolds sweep was conducted at zero yaw and pitch angle, with wind speed varying from 10m/s to 50m/s with 10m/s interval.

Results in Figure 3 shows that 30m/s and above are the speeds where the aerodynamic coefficient will become independent of velocity. Hence, wind speed of 40m/s, which corresponds to the Reynolds number.
of $3.7 \times 10^3$ was selected to be the test speed throughout the testing.

(ii) Test Configurations
The test configurations conducted at UTM-LST, with the blade angle set at $-6.5^\circ$ and rotates counter-clockwise from plane view, is as follows:

i) Comparison with Marignane France test results
ii) At zero wind speed, varying the rpm of main rotor
iii) At wind speed of 40m/s, varying the rpm of main rotor

The moments were then transferred from BMC to the model's centre of gravity. All results presented in this paper are in wind axes coordination. Figure 4 shows the flowchart of data reduction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

(i) Comparison with Marignane Test Results [1]
For this, tests were done at similar configurations as tests in Marignane, i.e., test wind speed was at 40m/s and main rotor rotation was 300rpm, except that the yaw and pitch sweep range for UTM-LST was smaller ($-10^\circ$ to $10^\circ$) compared to Marignane ($-12^\circ$ to $12^\circ$).

(ii) At zero wind speed (hovering), varying the rpm of the main rotor
This test was conducted to determine if the short blade is contributing to aerodynamic lift at all. For that, the test was conducted at zero wind speed with variations of the main rotor rpm. Surprisingly, the blade rotation has no effect on the aerodynamic lift. It may be due to the shortness of the blade.
and the blade's setting angle of 6.5°. The lift force was recorded at 0.60N and 0.62N at 300rpm and 900rpm respectively. Further investigation is required to confirm these results.

(iii) At 40ms wind speed, varying the rpm of the main rotor

Figure 9 indicates, as predicted, that the drag increases with yaw angle. However, it seems that the main rotor rotation has almost no effect on the aerodynamic drag at zero yaw and pitch angles.

Figure 10 shows that the rpm of the main rotor with short blade, at zero pitch and yaw angle, clearly has no effect on the CD values. However, this may be true only for this specific case, i.e., the main rotor blade is at one-third of the actual length.

Results also depict that the assembly of the main rotor hub, including the short blades, contributes about 35% of the overall CD of this helicopter model. Therefore, it can be concluded that the aerodynamic design of the assembly of the main rotor hub is very crucial as it significantly affects overall drag.

Interestingly, the graphs also show that there is no clear relation between the main rotor rpm with the aerodynamic loads. Further investigation is required to confirm these results.

As the model demonstrates characteristics of $C_{m_\theta} = -0.05$ and $C_{m_\phi} = +0.05$, hence it be concluded that it is statically stable in the longitudinal and lateral mode [2-5].
CONCLUSION

Results comparison made for UTM-LST and Mariquene tunnels show a good agreement with each other. Throughout this paper, results of the aerodynamic loads in a variation of pitch and yaw angles, as well as the main rotor rpm sweep, on a generic 360Z model helicopter had been presented.

It is found that with short blades, for this specific blade length and blade
pitch angle, the main rotor rpm has a very small influence on the aerodynamic drag at zero yaw and pitch.

Results also indicate that at zero pitch and yaw, the main rotor hub assembly contributes about 30% of the model's total aerodynamic drag. In terms of stability analysis, results demonstrate that the model is statically stable.

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REFERENCES


