

Government Flying Service

Government Flying Service (GFS) is one of the disciplined services of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. As at December 31, 2020, it has an establishment of 324 personnel responsible for flight operations, aircraft maintenance and administration. GFS Headquarters is located at the south-western corner of the Hong Kong International Airport at north Lantau.

History of GFS: GFS began operating on April 1, 1993 immediately after the disbandment of its predecessor, the Royal Hong Kong Auxiliary Air Force.

Vision: To be recognised worldwide as a provider of excellent search, rescue and aviation support services.

Mission: GFS is committed to serving the community and the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region by providing 24-hour aviation support through dedication, teamwork and professional excellence. The services will be safe, responsive, efficient and cost effective.

GFS will continuously develop the capabilities of its employees and recognise their achievements.

Value: GFS is committed to demonstrating the values embodied in its guiding principles:

- Safety** GFS is committed to providing safe flying services at the highest professional standard.
- Integrity** GFS members treat one another with respect, openness and honesty; cooperate and work as a team; and GFS practices what it preaches.
- Service** GFS is responsive to its customers' (internal and external) needs and continuously strive for improvement in its services.

Structure: The department is headed by the Controller who reports directly to the Secretary for Security.

The Operations Division coordinates with various government departments to provide flying services such as search and rescue, air ambulance, internal security and fire-fighting. The Division is supported by a team of professional pilots and air crewman officers.

The flying and operational activities are supported by the Engineering Division, which is an approved HKAR 145 maintenance organisation. The Division provides all aircraft and equipment maintenance services for the department. In 2011, GFS was granted with the HKAR-21 Design Organisation Approval which is the first of such kind in Hong Kong. With this approval, GFS is able to approve and perform aircraft structural damage repair. GFS is the only organisation in Hong Kong that has authority to conduct design modification on both helicopters and fixed wing aircraft.

All flying and engineering activities are monitored by both internal and external quality audit organisations. Regular inspections are carried out by internal and external auditors.

Roles: GFS operates in accordance with civil aviation rules with exemptions where necessary. The department provides round-the-clock flying services, including search and rescue, internal security support, emergency air ambulance service and fire-fighting operations. It also provides services to support the work of various government departments.

Search and Rescue: One of the major tasks of GFS is search and rescue. The area of responsibility covers the majority of the South China Sea up to 1 300 kilometers south of Hong Kong.

The Challenger 605 (CL-605) fixed wing aircraft are used as the initial search aircraft for long range search and rescue operations and to guide helicopters directly to the scene, thus maximising the helicopters' effective range and/or time on scene by eliminating their need to search.

The Airbus H175 helicopters, equipped with advanced avionics and mission equipment, are capable of automatic approach to a hover for day and night search and rescue operations. In addition to mountain rescue missions within Hong Kong, the H175 helicopters provide core search and rescue services, covering an offshore area up to 370 kilometers from Hong Kong. The range of the H175 helicopters can be further extended if refuelling is available from oilrigs in the South China Sea.

Internal Security: GFS provides support to other disciplined services and the Inter-departmental Counter-terrorism Unit to maintain the internal security of Hong Kong.

Specifically, GFS provides air support to the Hong Kong Police Force, in particular, the Special Duties Unit and the Police Tactical Unit.

Fitted with sophisticated equipment and with long fuel endurance, the CL-605's are regularly tasked by the Hong Kong Police Force, the Customs and Excise Department and other disciplined services to perform various law-enforcement operations.

Air Ambulance: The H175 helicopters can provide Emergency Medical Services for Hong Kong people in response to emergency calls from clinics located at outlying islands or accident scenes. In association with the introduction of Emergency Medical System, the GFS has expanded its Air Medical Officer support programme to include more specially trained doctors and nurses, who volunteer their services to provide specialist trauma and emergency treatment to the patients on board the aircraft. The service has been extended to cover from Fridays to Mondays and public holidays.

Fire-Fighting: The H175 helicopters have good load lifting capability. The aircraft can carry large loads of water for countryside fire suppression operations. These operations are mounted in conjunction with the Fire Services Department, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Civil Aid Service.

Aerial Surveillance/Aerial Survey: The CL-605s are ideal aircraft to perform regular patrols for detecting drug trafficking, illegal immigrants, smuggling and environmental pollution. The CL-605s are modified to accommodate a modern high quality aerial survey camera for digital aerial photography purpose. The photographs taken are used for the production of maps, survey of land reclamation and associated tasks. Equipped with a specially designed meteorological probe and dropsonde launching system, the CL-605s are also deployed to collect air data related to windshear, turbulence and tropical cyclones for the Hong Kong Observatory.

With the installation of the Aerial Radiation Monitoring System, the H175 helicopters provide support to the Hong Kong Observatory in monitoring the radiation level in the atmosphere.

General Government Support: GFS helicopters also provide support for various government departments in respect of VIP tours of Hong Kong, Justice of Peace movements to remote locations, photography of construction projects and transportation of personnel and equipment in support of numerous government services located on hilltops and outlying islands.

Statistics: In 2020, GFS flew a total of 7 989 hours, assisted in 1 016 search and rescue operations and transported 1 496 people to hospitals by helicopter.

GFS will continue to enhance its services to the community of Hong Kong and to those in peril in the South China Sea and improve its performance in meeting the ever-changing demands on its service.