

Carson City facility offers specialized mountain training

CASE STUDY



The Colombian army has sent more than 60 officers to the Bristow Academy facility in Carson City, Nevada, for mountain training, with more on the way.



Need to learn how to land on a mountain? Bristow Academy in Carson City can show you how.

CHALLENGE: Training pilots for military operations and surveillance missions related to anti-terrorism and anti-drug trafficking activities in the required specialized mountain flying techniques.

SOLUTION: Bristow Academy has opened a new facility in Carson City, Nevada, that uses the Sierra Nevada mountains to provide some of the most-challenging conditions for helicopter training.

BENEFIT: Military and civilian pilots are able to receive the tailored training they need to carry out their missions in difficult terrain and at night.

With the Sierra Nevada mountain range as its next-door neighbor, Bristow Academy's newest facility in Carson City, Nevada, offers some of the most-challenging conditions for helicopter training.

"The mountain flying techniques we teach here are used mostly in military operations and surveillance missions related to anti-terrorism and anti-drug trafficking activities," says Lead Flight Instructor Oscar Gomez, who also manages base operations. "We are able to customize the training to each client's requirements."

Since the base opened in May 2011, Gomez and instructors Jose Revilla and Ernesto del Castillo have trained more than 60 officers from the Colombian army, as well as Trinidad & Tobago Air Guard pilots and civilian pilots from Greenland and Ireland. At least 20 more officers from Colombia are signed up for training.

FLYING HIGH

With the Carson City Airport nearly 4,700 feet above sea level, training flights in the three Bell 206 aircraft reach altitudes of 9,000 feet. "We teach and practice all the different mountain flying techniques," Gomez says. "We also introduce students to power management awareness and how to use the tabular data extracted from performance charts to predict and control the available amount of torque required to execute an approach in mountainous terrain."

In addition to the mountain peaks, flying in Carson City often means encounters with strong winds, high temperatures in the summer and snow during the winter. Trainees also have to fly at night. Safety training is an important element of the training process.

"After the ground school and daytime flying, we put on night vision goggles and experience the changes they can make to depth perception and estimating distance," Gomez says. "All of these variables make this environment a lot more challenging."

Bristow Academy is the largest professional helicopter training academy in the world.