
Dedicated to the Advancement of the International Helicopter Community

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 12, 2023

Contact: Dan Sweet

Phone: 703-683-4646

Email: dan.sweet@rotor.org

**David Ellis Receives HAI's Salute to Excellence
Golden Hour Award**

Alexandria, Virginia (Jan. 12, 2023) – Helicopter Association International (HAI) is pleased to announce David Ellis, executive director of Haiti Air Ambulance, is the 2023 recipient of the Salute to Excellence Golden Hour Award. The award recognizes the efforts of an individual, group, or organization that, through a particular activity or contributions over time, has advanced the use of helicopters or UAS aircraft in air medical transport. It will be presented on Mar. 6, 2023, at HAI HELI-EXPO 2023 in Atlanta, Georgia.

When charity air medical transport service Haiti Air Ambulance (HAA) was founded in 2014 as Haiti's only helicopter air ambulance provider, David Ellis was one of the first flight paramedics to volunteer. Volunteering for 10 to 14 days at a time, he supported the HAA team's tireless work with various hospitals and medical groups to improve both the quality of and access to lifesaving and life-changing care.

In 2020, Ellis took over the helm of the service as executive director, ushering in a significant change in the way HAA approached which patients were transported by helicopter. He shifted away from the traditional US helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS) guidelines related to injury severity or threat to life. Instead, he focused on reasons specific to Haiti's land transport challenges: a grossly underequipped and understaffed national ambulance service, gas shortages, impassable roads, and rampant gang violence and roadblocks.

"The US's stringent patient-carrying criteria just don't work here," Ellis says. "Sometimes, people cannot get to medical services. Their injuries can become life-threatening if not treated. Our service is for a funded charity, so we look at how we can affect as many lives as possible with that funding. Sometimes it's bringing patients to medical services. Sometimes it's bringing vital medical supplies and professionals to the people."

Ellis's philosophy has led to two significant results: An exponential increase in the number of flights for the service and a monumental improvement in transport times. Since its inception, HAA has transported more than 1,500 patients, all during daylight VFR conditions. An impressive 53% of those were transported in the past two years since Ellis took the helm. More than 500 patients were transported in 2022 alone. Additionally, in a country where ground transport times average 205 minutes, HAA averages 26 minutes.

Ellis has also been instrumental in developing relationships with local doctors, hospitals, charities, and service providers. Most of HAA's staff are Haitian, including several doctors he hired who provide vital direction and insight to HAA for operations in the country, helping Ellis direct a service that meets the extended needs of Haiti's population.

For instance, many medical facilities in the country lack several basics. Some do not have a permanent roof, others have only a doctor or two with no nursing support, and virtually none has cafeterias or prepared food for

patients. With the understanding that a patient will need a support person in the hospital to care for and feed them, Ellis arranged for HAA to transport a family member or friend with every patient.

Haiti is also experiencing a steep increase in gang activity and unrest. In addition to arranging for HAA to carry more patients to avoid the violence, Ellis has taken steps to protect his team, hiring armored cars and security services to ensure that vital airlift work is not interrupted.

Under Ellis's leadership, HAA is growing. A second Bell 407 will arrive in-country in early 2023, potentially doubling HAA's impact in the impoverished nation.

As a certified flight paramedic, Ellis is dedicated to sharing his experience. He has served as a subject matter expert and author for Jones and Bartlett Learning. Ellis is also an instructor in tactical trauma training. Most recently, he returned from providing hands-on training to medical personnel in Ukraine.

The Golden Hour Award will be presented during HAI HELI-EXPO 2023. HAI HELI-EXPO[®], the world's largest helicopter trade show and exhibition, will be held at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, Georgia, Mar. 6–9, with the exhibit hall open Mar. 7–9. For more information on HAI HELI-EXPO 2023, visit heliexpo.com.

###

HAI is the professional trade association for the international helicopter industry and represents more than 1,100 companies and over 16,000 industry professionals in more than 65 countries. Each year, HAI members safely operate more than 3,700 helicopters and remotely piloted aircraft approximately 2.9 million hours. HAI is dedicated to the promotion of the helicopter as a safe, effective method of commerce and to the advancement of the international helicopter community.