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*Dedicated to the Advancement of the International Helicopter Community*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 8, 2011

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## **Helicopter Association International Joins the Fight Against Human Trafficking**

*Alexandria, Virginia (March 8, 2021)* – Helicopter Association International (HAI) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in partnership with the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the US Department of Transportation (DOT) on an outreach campaign to combat human trafficking through the DHS Blue Lightning Initiative (BLI).

Through this partnership, HAI will team with the DHS to educate the general aviation community about the pervasiveness of human trafficking, how to recognize it, and the methods for stopping it.

BLI is an element of the DHS Blue Campaign led by the DOT and US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), a DHS agency. BLI trains aviation industry personnel to detect and report human trafficking occurring within the commercial and general aviation sectors.

“HAI is taking action through this partnership to raise awareness about human trafficking within our industry,” says Jim Viola, CEO and president of HAI. “The vertical flight industry serves many missions that benefit our society. We will not tolerate this horrendous activity or allow our industry to be used to facilitate such atrocious acts. We stand proudly with our federal partners and others in aviation to help end these terrible crimes.”

“DHS is proud to announce a BLI partnership with Helicopters Association International,” said Trent Frazier, Executive Director for DHS Campaigns. “Aviation employees, to include the Vertical Take-off & Landing industry can play a critical role in recognizing and reporting human trafficking that occurs in and around our airports. BLI is committed to training general and commercial aviation industry employees and we look forward to continuing this important relationship to fight human trafficking in our Country.”

“The U.S. Department of Transportation is proud to work with our partners across government and the aviation sector on critical counter-trafficking efforts,” said Julie Abraham, Director of the Office of International Transportation and Trade, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation, which serves as the programmatic lead for USDOT's human trafficking initiative. “When frontline aviation employees are trained to recognize and report suspected instances of human trafficking, actionable tips are reported to law enforcement to help stop the crime. This BLI partnership highlights the commitment of the helicopter industry

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in joining airlines, airports, and industry associations across the country to take a stand against human trafficking.”

To date, BLI has trained more than 100,000 personnel in the aviation industry who continue to report actionable tips to law enforcement. More information about the program is available at [DHS Blue Lightning Initiative](#).

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*HAI is the professional trade association for the international helicopter industry. HAI members represent more than 3,000 aviation businesses and individuals who safely operate more than 4,500 helicopters approximately 2.3 million hours each year in more than 73 nations. 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.*