



On 14 July 1997 Escuadrón Aéreo No. 5 took delivery of six Westland Wessex HC Mk 2s which had served with the RAF's No. 28 Squadron at Sek Kong prior to the UK's handover of Hong Kong to China. The helicopters arrived at Montevideo by sea, but suffered from poor serviceability, and consequently saw little service. In April 2002, during a visit to Uruguay, the UK Chief of the Air Staff expressed his favourable disposition to the transfer of three further HC Mk 2s to Uruguay when No. 84 Squadron at Akrotiri retires the type in 2003.

#### Escuadrón Aéreo No. 5 (Helicópteros)

This unit was initially created as a provisional search and rescue group in 1955, with two Bell H-13Grs, two Ryan L-17B Havrons and two Piper PA-18s operating from Aeródromo Militar Cap. (Sto) Juan Manuel Borda Larca (currently HQ FAU). In 1960 the unit was formally commissioned and renamed Grupo de Aviación No. 5 (Búsqueda y Rescate), and in December 1963 moved to its current location at Base Aérea No. 1, Carrasco International Airport. On 25 August 1976, six UH-1B



'Canoheros' were delivered from the USA, of which the last flew until 22 November 1990. By 1980 two civil Bell 212s had strengthened the force and, every year, one Twin Huey is airlifted by C-130 to Antártica in support of the Uruguayan scientists based there during the summer period. For this role both 212s received a high-visibility colour scheme (below). When not deployed south, the helicopters are extensively used for SAR duties. Ex-RAF Wessexes were delivered in 1997, and in November

1997 the FAU received the first of two new AS 365F2 Dauphins (left for SAR and VIP transport duties, the second arriving in January 1998). On 29 June 1998, Escuadrón No. 5's complement was expanded by five UH-1H Hueys (above) delivered by C-5 Galaxy. Three of them had been overhauled prior to their delivery and were put directly into service, joining the three survivors from an earlier batch. The Huey is a much appreciated workhorse and is used for tactical transport, police duties, special day and night operations, and also for SAR, medical and fire-fighting duties.

Today, Escuadrón Aéreo No. 5 can rely on some 30 pilots and 50 technicians operating some 10 helicopters to provide search and rescue services across the vast national territory. One helicopter and crew are on a permanent 5-minute SAR alert at Carrasco IAP, with two additional crews on a 30-minute alert. A single Huey is on detachment at the 'El Jaguar' airport on a 5-minute alert, close to the popular beach resort of Punta del Este.

