

# Abu Dhabi Aviation's support is critical to safety of racers

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**ABU DHABI** — The 2012 Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge draws to a close tomorrow as the international field races north from the Empty Quarter desert and back to the capital for the ceremonial finish next to Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina Yacht Club at 4.30pm.

The 287-kilometre Abu Dhabi Aviation leg is named after the organisation that provides the most critical service of the entire rally – the aerial Search And Rescue (SAR) support – and will end what has been a spectacular opening round of the FIM Cross-Country Rallies World Championship and second round of the FIA World Cup for Cross-Country Rallies.

The 2012 edition of the rally marks Abu Dhabi Aviation's first year as sole provider of aircraft, pilots and logistical assistance to the Desert Challenge. The company is the Middle East's largest commercial helicopter operator, and four of those helicopters are in action at the rally.

The company is providing the potentially life-saving SAR service for the medical crews who, typically, are called to the assistance of more than 10 per cent of all entrants during the course of the race. This year, for the very first time, Abu Dhabi Aviation has also arranged for the helicopters to refuel at the Madinat Zayed hospital, ensuring the whole SAR operation runs far more quickly and smoothly. "The Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge is a true test of an individual's physical and mental character. Competitors are racing in one of the toughest environments known to man, and each individual understands the potential dangers involved," said Mohammed Ben Sulayem, Desert Challenge founder and President of race organisers, the Automobile and Touring Club of the UAE (ATCUAE). "Abu Dhabi Aviation's support is critical to the safety of the racers, and in their debut year as sole provider, they have raised the bar for Search And Rescue standards."

The leaders are expected to finish at around 10:10am near Al Dafrah on the edge of the city of Abu Dhabi, bringing to a close the 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of the world's ultimate desert rally.