

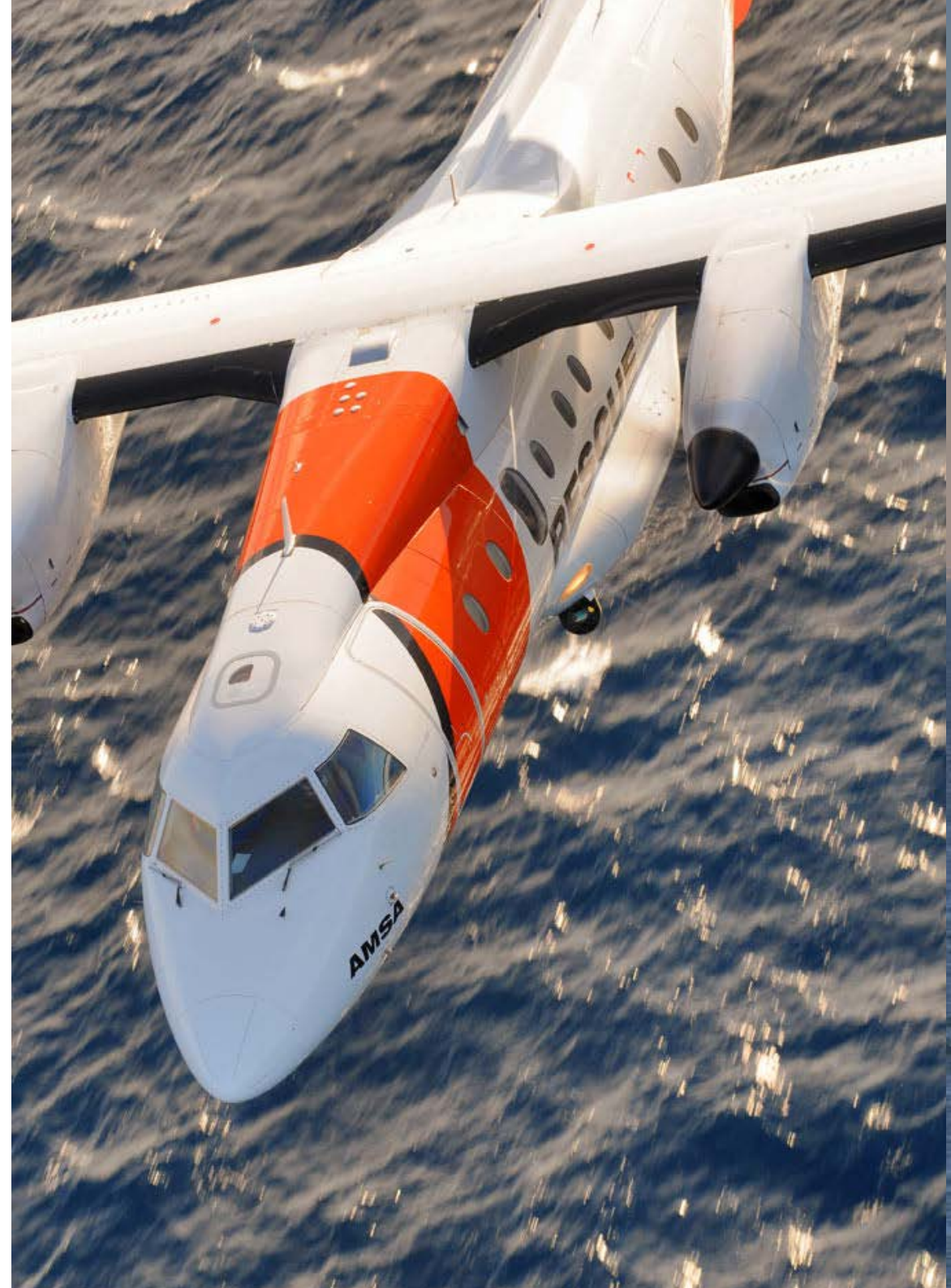
DORNIER 328-100

THIS AIRCRAFT, WITH ITS VERY DISTINCTIVE SHARK-LIKE SHAPE AND COLOUR SCHEME IS HARD TO MISS, AND EVEN THOUGH I HAD SEEN IT A NUMBER OF TIMES, I DID NOT KNOW WHAT IT WAS.

So it was with some surprise that I found myself in a pre-shoot briefing between Perth based Aero Rescue and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), chatting about how we were going to shoot this aircraft, at the same time I was reading up as much as I could about the Dornier 328. My only knowledge of Dorniers were the ones that regularly visited the UK....back in the early 1940's!.

This machine looked good from any angle, even from the rear. I looked at the fixed wing option as a camera platform but thought that David Adamson's AS350 Squirrel would be perfect as the camera platform. Besides, the window of opportunity that the open door of a helicopter gave was stunning. The Dornier acts as a life-line for people stranded or in trouble in water or on land, so we thought as a background, the reef system of Rottnest Island could work well. We did a couple of visits just looking at the aircraft on the ground, studying its lines and possible angles. The more I looked at this aircraft the more I appreciated its design and styling. This was one superbly built aircraft.

The AS350 gave us a slightly better margin for error over the R44, and with my full face helmet I could get out into the slipstream without my eyes streaming. We had a briefing with the two Dornier pilots, Steve Harris and Russell Buchanan, plus Shane Johnson from AMSA, David and myself. David always requires the target aircraft to fly on a set heading and a set height. This gives us the chance to see how stable they are in the air, only then can we get close to get our shots. Once or twice sorties have ended up a mess because once on site, the target





pilot for some reason can not keep the set heading, therefore we cannot get close. So with the Dornier along side David and I looked at each other, both thinking 'well lets see if they can do what they say they can'.

We arrived off Rottneest Island at about 1500 feet and waited. The Dornier came in, we approached it tentatively, and the aircraft remained there rock steady, doing everything David asked. These guys were superb, they noticed how close we were, registered it and stuck to their instruments and held the pattern. David, being a Scot, does not give too much away, but he turned to me with a thumbs up, and winked. These guys knew what they were doing, so it was on with the show.

We got so close that I could almost put my foot out and touch the elevators. The aircraft was steady as a rock. This meant I could slow down and really look for the best angles. We had about 45 minutes and because of the crews coordination, meant that we could push the envelope a bit and achieve any shot I wanted. Birds eye, tail on, head on, three quarter, banking etc. So for 45 minutes I just kept my eye to the viewfinder and captured the beauty of this very graceful aircraft. On the way back to Perth we crossed Gage Roads shipping lane, which was full of waiting tankers waiting to get into Fremantle, so these were an added bonus to the background.



BEHIND THE SCENES



My point of view of the Dornier from the open back of the AS350 helicopter.