MH-60R Helicopter Enters Operational Evaluation

The U.S. Navy this week begins Operational Evaluation of the MH-60R Weapons System, the next generation submarine hunter and surface attack helicopter that will replace the fleet's legacy SH-60B and SH-60F aircraft. Designed as a rigorous assessment of the aircraft and its mission systems in operational flight conditions, Operational Evaluation is the aircraft's final test phase before fleet introduction and delivery.

Navy evaluators gave the authorization to begin Operational Evaluation (OPEVAL) at an April 22 Operations Test Readiness Review meeting. The decision followed the helicopter's successful completion of the Navy's six-month-long developmental test phase, known as Technical Evaluation, in February.

The Navy's Air Test and Evaluation Squadron One (VX-1), based at Patuxent River, Md, will perform the operational evaluation at various test ranges, and is expected to conclude in September. Specifically, VX-1 will evaluate the performance of the MH-60R aircraft and its on-board weapons subsystems, including the multimode radar, electronic support measures and radar warning receiver, airborne dipping sonar and acoustics. The fusion of multiple data sources for most effective workload management and decision-making also will be evaluated.

"OPEVAL will enable our VX-1 pilots and operators to fully evaluate the dramatically added reach, precision and combat effectiveness of the MH-60R weapons system," said Navy MH-60R Program Manager Capt. Paul Grosklags. "Of particular interest will be the new tactics that will begin to evolve from the enhanced capability to localize, track and attack undersea and surface targets."

"Entry into the operational evaluation phase affirms Navy confidence in the MH-60R weapons system," said Jeff Bantle, vice president and general manager of Multi-Mission Solutions at Lockheed Martin Systems Integration - Owego. "We are excited about the tremendous increase in capability, and the future fleet's enhanced operational effectiveness in the littoral battle space."

"MH-60R OPEVAL marks a major step towards Milestone III and full-rate production," said Len Wengler, vice president of Maritime Programs at Sikorsky Aircraft. "We look forward to the introduction of the MH-60R and the major increase in war fighting capability it will provide the U.S. Navy. The MH-60R will set the standard for ASW and ASuW aircraft."

Lockheed Martin is the mission systems integrator for the MH-60R, and also provides the digital cockpit, which is common to all MH-60S and MH-60R helicopters. Sikorsky designs and manufactures the MH-60S and MH-60R aircraft and is responsible for the mechanical and electrical modifications on the airframe.

The MH-60R program, co-lead by Cmdr. Kevin Switick and Mr. Robert Kimble, is a department within the Multi-mission Helicopter Program Office (PMA-299), headquartered at the Naval Air Systems Command in Patuxent River, Md. PMA-299 is administered by the Program Executive Office for Air ASW, Assault and Special Mission Programs (PEO-A).

Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation, based in Stratford, Conn., is a world leader in helicopter design, manufacturing and service. Sikorsky is a subsidiary of United Technologies Corporation , of Hartford, Conn., which provides a broad range of high-technology products and support services to the aerospace and building systems industries.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md, Lockheed Martin employs about 130,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services.

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