First Production VH-71 Presidential Helicopter Joins Test Program

The first production VH-71 presidential replacement helicopter has arrived at Naval Air Station Patuxent River by U.S. Air Force C-17 cargo plane from helicopter manufacturer AgustaWestland. The helicopter, called pilot production one (PP-1), will undergo two months of ground vibration testing before flying to prime contractor Lockheed Martin Systems Integration in Owego, NY, for installation of the mission systems, communications suite, and presidential interior and exterior livery.

(LOGO: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20070705/LOCKHEEDLOGO)
(LOGO: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20070705/AGUSTALOGO)

"This is a watershed event in the execution of this program," said Jeff Bantle, Lockheed Martin VH-71 vice president and general manager. "It's the fifth VH-71 helicopter to join the program, and a significant milestone because it's the first of five pilot production aircraft to begin testing. These pilot production aircraft will be delivered to the HMX-1 squadron after completion of a comprehensive test program for operational use as "Marine One" helicopters for the President."

"The first production presidential helicopter demonstrates the success of a proven platform transformed into the most capable and safe helicopter for the presidential mission," said Stephen C. Moss, chief executive officer of AgustaWestland North America. "PP-1's performance was superb during the initial test and evaluation with 11.3 hours of ground runs and 6.6 flight hours, and we look forward to the VH-71 entering service."

Four test aircraft are already part of the VH-71 presidential helicopter program's first phase, or Increment One. Two of these test helicopters are in flight testing with an integrated test team, made up of Navy, Marine Corps and industry pilots, while the other two are being integrated with mission systems. Four more pilot production helicopters are expected to arrive over the next six months.

Lockheed Martin Systems Integration-Owego is the prime contractor and systems integrator for the VH-71 program with overall responsibility for the program and aircraft system. AgustaWestland, the principal subcontractor, has responsibility for the basic air vehicle design, production build, and basic air vehicle support functions. Lockheed Martin and AgustaWestland have partnered for more than 17 years with a worldwide record of excellence dating back to the Royal Navy's EH101 Merlin Mk1 program.

AgustaWestland, a Finmeccanica company, is the global leader in designing, manufacturing and supporting the world's most technologically advanced helicopters. With more than 100 years of experience in the aerospace industry, AgustaWestland provides a full range of rotorcraft for every commercial, government and military application, and an unrivalled capability in training and support solutions.

Headquartered in Bethesda, MD, Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 140,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2007 sales of $41.9 billion.

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