Sikorsky Receives U.S. Navy Award To Build Four CH-53K Operational Test Helicopters

STRATFORD, Connecticut -

Sikorsky Aircraft Corp. has received a $435 million U.S. Navy contract to build four production-representative CH-53K heavy lift helicopters for the U.S. Marine Corps. Designated as System Demonstration Test Articles (SDTA), the four aircraft will enable the Marines to conduct operational evaluation of the new helicopter system in support of Initial Operational Capability in 2019.

“The four SDTA aircraft are based on the configuration of the fourth and final flight test aircraft currently being assembled on the prototype production line,” said Dr. Michael Torok, Sikorsky’s CH-53K Program Vice President. “We truly appreciate the high level of confidence the Navy and Marine Corps have shown to the CH-53K team as we move forward with this important next phase of the program.”

The Navy has included the SDTA helicopters as an additional line item under the existing $3.5 billion System Development and Demonstration (SDD) contract initially awarded to Sikorsky in April 2006. The contract schedule requires that Sikorsky deliver the first SDTA aircraft in 39 months, and the fourth by the end of March 2017, when the Marines will begin operational evaluation. The contract’s cost-plus-incentive fee arrangement incentivizes Sikorsky to deliver early. Sikorsky will perform final assembly of the SDTA aircraft at the company’s Florida Assembly and Flight Operations facility in West Palm Beach.

To date, Sikorsky has delivered two of the seven SDD CH-53K aircraft – the Ground Test Vehicle and the Static Test Article – into the test program, and is finalizing assembly of the four flight test aircraft and the Fatigue Test Article. First flight of a CH-53K prototype aircraft is expected in late 2014.

Once the SDTA aircraft enter operational evaluation in 2017, the Marine Corps will verify the CH-53K helicopter’s capability to carry 27,000 pounds over 110 nautical miles under “high hot” ambient conditions, nearly tripling the external load carrying capacity of the current CH-53E Super Stallion™ helicopter.

Technology enablers for increased lift include three 7,500-shaft-horsepower GE38-1B engines; a split torque transmission design that more efficiently distributes engine power to the main rotors; fourth-generation composite rotor blades for enhanced lift; and a composite airframe structure for reduced weight.

"The SDTA contract represents an exciting and significant milestone in our program," said Col. Robert Pridgen, the Heavy Lift Helicopters program manager for the Naval Air Systems Command. "We are well on our way to making the CH-53K a reality for our Marines and our Naval fleet. The capability this aircraft brings, in every clime and place, is critical to sustaining the future missions of the Marine Air/Ground Task Force. The future of heavy lift is bright."

Per the current program of record, the Navy intends to order an additional 196 CH-53K aircraft as part of a separate production contract to stand up eight operational squadrons and one training squadron to support the Marine Corps’ operational requirements. Eventual production quantities would be determined year-by-year over the life of the program based on funding allocations set by Congress and the U.S. Department of Defense acquisition priorities.

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

This press release contains forward-looking statements concerning opportunities for development, production and sale of helicopters. Actual results may differ materially from those projected as a result of certain risks and uncertainties, including but not limited to changes in government procurement priorities and practices, budget plans, availability of funding and in the type and number of aircraft required; challenges in the design, development, production and support of advanced technologies; as well as other risks and uncertainties, including but not limited to those detailed from time to time in United Technologies Corporation’s Securities and Exchange Commission filings.

https://news.lockheedmartin.com/2013-06-06-Sikorsky-Receives-U-S-Navy-Award-to-Build-Four-CH-53K-Operational-Test-Helicopters