

Sikorsky Aircraft To Develop Autonomous BLACK HAWK For Cargo Missions

Orlando, Florida -

[Sikorsky Aircraft](#) announced today from the AUVSI Unmanned Systems conference that it will develop its first product to feature Matrix™ Technology, by converting a retired UH-60A BLACK HAWK helicopter into an optionally piloted variant capable of a wide spectrum of missions. Sikorsky Aircraft is a subsidiary of United Technologies Corp. (NYSE: UTX).

With the autonomous BLACK HAWK, Sikorsky plans to build on the success of its Matrix Technology and [Manned/Unmanned Resupply Aerial Lifter](#) (MURAL) autonomy programs to deliver a new level of mission flexibility to combat and logistic planners. The product will integrate autonomy and advanced fleet management technology with refurbishment experience to provide a cost-effective, dependable and sustainable system.

The autonomous BLACK HAWK helicopter will offer the flexibility of internal and external cargo capability, the strength to lift up to 9,000 pounds, and the productivity of high cruise speeds. The design is targeting a system loss rate of one per 100,000 flight hours.

“The autonomous BLACK HAWK will provide affordable, reliable, high-speed resupply to the warfighter in the harshest conditions at a cost per ton mile that competes with ground convoys,” said Mark Miller, vice president of Research & Engineering.

Design of a prototype system has been underway for more than a year, and induction of the first BLACK HAWK helicopter will begin later this month. Sikorsky will conduct a series of technology maturation tests during the build period using the Sikorsky Autonomy Research Aircraft (SARA), which is based on an S-76® commercial helicopter.

“While today we are announcing the creation of a proof-of-concept aircraft, Sikorsky is already prepared to ramp up system conversions per year as demand requires,” said Samir Mehta, Sikorsky’s president of Defense Systems & Services. “We are considering potential development partners and look forward to working with the Department of Defense and other customers to mature this concept and its associated operations.”

In collaboration with the U.S. Army, Sikorsky successfully demonstrated the ability of a UH-60M Upgrade Optionally Piloted BLACK HAWK helicopter to conduct autonomous flight and autonomous cargo resupply demonstrations through its MURAL Program earlier this year.

For the past year, Sikorsky has been aggressively advancing helicopter autonomous flight with its Matrix Technology program. The Matrix test aircraft, SARA, has conducted continuous flight testing to increase capabilities, adding advanced perception flights to its latest phase of envelope expansion.

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