World-First Refurbishment Of Black Hawk Helicopters For Firefighting And Disaster Relief In Australia Under New Agreement

BRISBANE, Australia, July 27, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- In a ground-breaking new deal, Kaan Air Australia, Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin (NYSE: LMT) company, and StarFlight Australia, have signed an agreement worth up to AUD $63 million to bring 10 Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters intoAustralia, with options for an additional 10 aircraft.

In a world-first refurbishment program to be undertaken inBrisbane, the agreement will see the purchase of 10 ex-US military Black Hawks, to be imported into Australia early next year. The Black Hawks will be brought up to 'as new' condition and repurposed specifically for aerial firebombing operations during future bushfire seasons around Australia and New Zealand and for year-round emergency services and disaster relief work.

The aircraft will be refurbished and maintained inBrisbane by Sikorsky. This initiative sees Kaan Air Australia and StarFlight Australia partner to usher in a new era in Australian emergency services and disaster relief aviation.

This agreement with Sikorsky Australia will be a boost for local aviation jobs, potentially creating more than 50 pilot and technical jobs in the long term, including apprenticeships.

John Skeen, chief executive officer of Kaan Air Australia and StarFlight Australia, welcomed the new agreement and said the deal would assist emergency services in filling a significant gap within Australia's firefighting and disaster relief resources.

"This is a game-changer for aviation inAustralia. The purchase of 10 plus 10 optioned Black Hawks represents a significant milestone for the firebombing and disaster relief helicopter industry in Australia, particularly in terms of efficient rotary wing attack to reduce loss of life and property during bushfire events," said Skeen.

"The helicopters are being purchased by an Australian company, will be registered inAustralia and most importantly, will be fully maintained and supported in Australia by the helicopter OEM Sikorsky and its supply chain commitment, helping to boost local jobs in the area and guaranteeing ongoing supply chain support of our Black Hawk fleet."

General Manager of Sikorsky Australia, Andrew Rushbrook, said that as the original manufacturer of the Black Hawk helicopter, there is no company better positioned to refurbish and maintain this incredible aircraft and no better place to do so than at Sikorsky Australia headquarters in Brisbane.

Kaan Air is one of Europe's leading helicopter utility operator and a renowned helicopter manufacturer (OEM) distributor for AgustaWestland and Russian helicopters and has significant operational experience in helicopter firefighting, off-shore and Air Medical Service businesses. In 2015 Kaan Air Australia established a joint venture under the StarFlight name with LifeFlight Australia.

Kaan Air Australia Chairman, Mr. Ferda Yildiz, said it was an important and significant deal for his company.

"We are very happy to be able to take part and contribute to the helicopter firefighting and disaster relief effort within Australia and further strengthen our ties with a very distinguished OEM, Sikorsky/Lockheed Martin," Yildiz said. "We aim to expand this cooperation beyond Australia in other parts of the world in similar projects using the expertise of our Australian company."

The initial 10 Black Hawk helicopters have been hand-picked by Sikorsky for their suitability in aerial firebombing and external heavy load lifting ability, and will be made available by StarFlight to assist emergency services and fire agencies in bushfires and natural disasters across the country.

StarFlight Australia will be the operator of the aircraft. The Black Hawks will undergo three months of extensive refurbishment, including new high performance engines, upgraded gear boxes, installation of Helicopter Terrain Awareness and Warning System (HTAWS) and a general overhaul which will be carried out by Sikorsky at its Pinkenba facility in Brisbane.

About Lockheed Martin Australia
Headquartered in Canberra, Lockheed Martin Australia is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Lockheed Martin

Corporation. The company employs more than 800 people in Australia working on a wide range of major programs spanning the aerospace, defence and civil sectors.

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