

# U.S. Marine Corps Declares Initial Operational Capability Of Sikorsky CH-53K®

*Major milestone for the most modern and powerful helicopter in DoD inventory*

STRATFORD, Conn., April 25, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- The U.S. Marine Corps declared Initial Operational Capability (IOC) for the CH-53K heavy lift helicopter, validating the platform's operational readiness to forward deploy Marines and equipment across the globe. Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin Company (NYSE: LMT) designed and manufactures the [CH-53K](#), which enables the U.S. Marine Corps and international militaries to move troops and equipment from ship to shore, and to higher altitude terrain, more quickly and effectively than ever before.

"This declaration is a vote of confidence from Marine Corps leadership and demonstrates the critical role of the CH-53K, giving forces more range and agility to conduct expeditionary heavy-lift assault transport of armored vehicles, equipment, and personnel. This capability is critical in the Indo-Pacific region and around the globe in support of the joint force and allies," said Sikorsky President Paul Lemmo. "Sikorsky and our nationwide CH-53K supply chain, including dozens of small businesses, are committed to delivering aircraft that can adapt to future missions and are reliable, sustainable and relevant for decades to come."

The path to [CH-53K IOC](#) included collaboration on Initial Operational Testing & Evaluation among Sikorsky, the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps to develop, test and validate the advanced capabilities of this 21<sup>st</sup> century aircraft.

## CH-53K Mission Critical Capabilities

Marines have been flying and supporting the CH-53K in the fleet environment demonstrating the aircraft is on track to fully deploy on schedule. The aircraft have flown more than 3,000 flight hours showcasing the CH-53K's performance in a range of mission scenarios including extreme cold and hot environments. Other accomplishments include:

- Day and night air-to-air refueling
- Air-to-air refueling with 27,000 lb. external load
- Sea trials with over 350 landings
- Live fire testing and evaluation
- Sustained operations simulating offload of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade
- Testing in degraded visual environment conditions at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground in Yuma, Arizona
- Delivery of first six aircraft to the Marine Corps

## Up Next: Full Rate Production

The IOC declaration positions the Marine Corps for a full rate production decision in 2023. The Approved Acquisition Objective is 200 aircraft.

The CH-53K [high-tech production line](#) in Stratford, Connecticut, is active with seven aircraft in build, including three on schedule to deliver to the Marine Corps this year. There are 46 aircraft fully on contract including four heavy-lift helicopters for the government of Israel and another 14 aircraft on contract for long lead material. The helicopters for Israel are under a U.S. Navy Foreign Military Sales (FMS) agreement.

The CH-53K program leverages digital thread technologies to achieve sustainment savings as well as increased performance and readiness. The digital thread permeates design, manufacture, operation, and sustainment of the CH-53K.

## CH-53K Delivers Increased Mission Readiness to Marines

The CH-53K has been specifically designed with a digitally-enhanced modern maintenance support environment to dramatically improve the maintainer's experience.

- Maintenance times will be reduced by one-third with several physical design features and smart technologies designed and built into the aircraft.
- The digital aircraft feeds into a modern plane-side automated maintenance system that enables advanced diagnostics and proactive support solutions.
- There is a robust support system in place for the CH-53K with spare parts, support equipment, validated repair manuals, and Sikorsky technical experts on the ground to support entry into service.

Increased readiness of the CH-53K will be enabled by leveraging the current success of the CH-53E, an aircraft specifically designed for maintainability. Sikorsky has unmatched experience providing parts, integrated logistics, best-in-class fleet data analytics, support services and a DoD award-winning Performance Based Logistics agreement to the U.S. Marine Corps and its CH-53E Super Stallion fleet for 38 years.

For additional information, visit our website: [www.lockheedmartin.com/ch53k](http://www.lockheedmartin.com/ch53k).

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