

Boeing's New CH-47F Chinook Helicopter Begins Operational Test Flights with U.S. Army

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The Boeing Company's [NYSE: BA] first production CH-47F Chinook helicopter for the U.S. Army has moved into Operational Testing (OT) at Ft. Campbell, Ky. The aircraft successfully completed acceptance and developmental flight testing in December 2006.

"The new CH-47F is characterized by technology," said Jack Dougherty, director, Boeing H-47 Programs. "The aircraft is equipped with a new digital cockpit and advanced avionics to meet the needs of current and future warfighters."

The flight tests will be conducted by Bravo Company, 7th Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). The acceptance flight phase included engine performance, communication and navigation verifications in addition to basic aircraft functionality testing. The OT phase, which ends in April, includes more than 60 flight test hours that simulate a wide range of mission scenarios. The Army will field the aircraft in July 2007.

"The arrival of the first CH-47Fs to the 101st Airborne Division brings us one step closer to employing the most advanced heavy-lift helicopter in the Global War on Terror," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Thomas Todd, CH-47F product manager.

The aircraft is the first of 452 CH-47F helicopters included in the U.S. Army Cargo Helicopter modernization program. It features a newly designed, modernized airframe and a Rockwell Collins Common Avionics Architecture System cockpit and BAE Digital Advanced Flight Control System. The advanced avionics provide improved situational awareness for flight crews with an advanced digital map display and a data transfer system that allows storing of preflight and mission data. Improved survivability features include Common Missile Warning and Improved Countermeasure Dispenser Systems.

The new CH-47F is the result of implementing lean manufacturing techniques, which reduced the overall part count, simplified the manufacturing and assembly process, facilitated the provision of totally new airframes for all CH-47Fs and generated a cost savings of more than 30 percent. The new components will reduce operating and support costs, improve the aircraft's structural integrity and extend the Chinook's service life.

Powered by two 4,868-horsepower Honeywell engines, the new CH-47F can reach speeds greater than 175 mph and transport payloads weighing more than 21,000 lbs. The CH-47F, with the Robertson Aviation Extended Range Fuel System, has a mission radius greater than 400 miles.

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