U.S. Immigration And Naturalization Service Orders 45 Boeing MD 600N Helicopters

-The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) endorsed advanced technology helicopters over conventional rotorcraft this week with the announcement that it will purchase 45 MD 600N helicopters from The Boeing Company (NYSE: BA).

Total value of the program, including aircraft, spares and support is estimated at $70.7 million.

The MD 600Ns will be assigned to the U.S. Border Patrol operating sectors between San Diego, Calif., and Miami, Fla., as replacement aircraft for its fleet of OH-6A helicopters.

The new MD 600N, with its ultra-quiet NOTAR® anti-torque system, high-reliability and low direct operating costs, was selected over competitive aircraft. The competition included a comprehensive technical proposal review and a thorough flight evaluation.

The contract award is the largest commercial helicopter order in more than 20 years for The Boeing Company's helicopter subsidiary in Mesa, Ariz., which also produces MD 500 Series and MD Explorer helicopters. The INS award also represents the initial acquisition of a NOTAR-system-equipped aircraft by the U.S. government.

The award calls for delivery of nine MD 600N helicopters the first year and options for nine more MD 600Ns each year for four additional years. First delivery will be in early 1998.

The MD 600Ns are eight-place, single-turbine helicopters that feature the company's exclusive NOTAR system for anti-torque and directional control.

The NOTAR system, which has been in service since 1991 on three types of helicopters, makes the helicopters the safest and quietest helicopters flying. Since the system was introduced in 1991 and in more than 125,000 hours of flying, there have been no failures or accidents related to the anti-torque system on any NOTAR system-equipped helicopters.

"The MD 600N is the key to the INS' fleet replacement program for rotary-winged aircraft," said Erv Hunter, vice president of the company's light helicopter operation in Mesa. "The helicopter is fast and agile and adaptable to a large number of Border Patrol missions."

The larger, more powerful MD 600N helicopters give Border Patrol agents greater effectiveness in their flight operations against illegal entry into the United States. To increase productivity, particularly during night operations, the Border Patrol is incorporating night surveillance equipment, data down-linking and improved communicating tools as standard equipment in the helicopters.

"The quiet technology of the MD 600N permits Border Patrol aircraft to reduce their detectability during surveillance operations and to 'fly neighborly' when operating over urban areas," said Alan Neugebauer, business development manager for The Boeing Company in Mesa.

"Additionally, the application of more modern aircraft into the Border Patrol fleet brings greater reliability and longer component life than previously available, reducing maintenance costs and improving aircraft availability," Neugebauer said.

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