Boeing to Sell Commercial Helicopter Lines to Bell Helicopter Textron

The Boeing Company today announced its intention to sell its single-engine commercial helicopter business to Bell Helicopter Textron of Fort Worth, Texas.

The sale includes all variants of the MD 500 Series and MD 600N single-engine helicopters, plus the technology that eliminates the tail rotor on those aircraft. Terms of the sale, which is subject to due diligence and regulatory approvals, were not disclosed.

The twin-engine Boeing MD Explorer is not included in the sale. However, Bell has agreed to provide, under license, full spares support and technical service to the existing fleet of MD Explorers around the world. Bell will also provide in-service support of MD-500 and MD-600 helicopters.

The proposed sale to Bell supports a strategic decision announced earlier this month by Boeing to exit the market for commercial helicopters. As part of that strategy, Boeing is transferring its interest in the Bell Boeing 609 Tiltrotor to Bell Helicopter Textron and will assume a subcontractor role in the continued development of that aircraft.

"We're pleased to have reached an agreement with Bell on the sale of these helicopter lines," said Alan Mulally, Boeing senior vice president and president of the company's information, space and defense businesses. "This sale supports our strategic decision to focus on building the world's best military rotorcraft and strengthens Bell's position in the commercial helicopter business. We're confident that Bell will provide outstanding support for customers of the MD-series helicopters."

No firm deadlines for completion of the light helicopter sale to Bell have been announced, but company officials said they expected the transfer of the production line to be completed within a matter of months. Boeing military rotorcraft programs, the AH-64D Apache Longbow, the RAH-66 Comanche, the CH-47 Chinook, and the V-22 Osprey, will remain with the company. Boeing officials said the company is seeking another buyer for the MD Explorer.

Boeing builds the MD 500 Series, MD 600N and the MD Explorer at its facility in Mesa, Ariz. Approximately 350 people are employed on these programs in Mesa. Boeing is working to identify opportunities on other programs for affected employees.

The Boeing Company is the world's largest manufacturer of commercial aircraft and military aircraft, and serves as NASA's largest contractor. The company employs more than 235,000 people worldwide. Its headquarters are located in Seattle, Wash.

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For further information:
Larry McCracken
Seattle
(206) 655-6123
Tom Downey
St. Louis
(314) 234-3500