Boeing Signs U.S. Army Chinook Modernization Contract

The Boeing Company and the Department of Defense have signed a contract to begin upgrading the U.S. Army's CH-47D Chinook fleet and retain its heavy-lift capabilities well into the 21st century.

The multibillion-dollar Improved Cargo Helicopter (ICH) program calls for the modernization of at least 300 CH-47D Chinooks, which will improve performance and contain operational and support costs until development and fielding of the Joint Transport Rotorcraft (JTR). JTR is scheduled to begin replacing Army and U.S. Marine Corps heavy-lift helicopters around 2020.

The $76 million contract covers the ICH program's engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) phase. During EMD, the Boeing rotorcraft program management center in Philadelphia will modernize two ICH prototypes, manage initial flight tests, evaluate system improvements and prepare for ICH production. Rockwell Collins of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, will develop the aircraft's cockpit management system.

Boeing will deliver the first production ICH Chinooks in 2002. At full production, the program will complete 26 modernized Chinooks each year through 2013 and employ 750-1,000 people. If JTR is delayed, as many as 400 CH-47Ds may be upgraded to ICH standards.

Major ICH improvements include fuselage "tuning" to reduce effects of vibration during flight on aircraft systems; installation of a Military Standard 1553 data bus to permit eventual digital integration of the Chinook's flight controls and cockpit management systems; and repair and replacement of aircraft structures and systems as needed. Under a separately funded program, Allied Signal will provide kits to upgrade Chinook engines to the T55-GA-714 standard. The new engines will provide increased lift and better fuel economy.

Chinooks have been in U.S. Army service since 1962. The multi-year CH-47D modernization program was completed in 1994 and involved 476 aircraft. ICH modernization means that Chinooks may remain in the Army's fleet for 70 years or more.

The Boeing Company develops and produces military rotorcraft for customers worldwide. Among its products are the CH-47 Chinook, the AH-64D Apache Longbow, the RAH-66 Comanche and the V-22 Osprey.

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