Boeing Launches CH-47F/Improved Cargo Helicopter Program

The Boeing CH-47 Chinook is getting a new lease on life, and Boeing Philadelphia is marking the event today with CH-47F/ Improved Cargo Helicopter (ICH) Day.

Boeing, which has manufactured Chinooks for the U.S. Army and international customers since 1962, is beginning a new program that will keep Boeing CH-47 Chinooks flying with the U.S. Army through at least 2030.

The Improved Cargo Helicopter program will modernize at least 300 CH-47Ds in the Army's Chinook fleet to a more capable and efficient CH-47F configuration. The first two Chinooks, designated as the program's engineering prototypes, are entering the modernization line today.

The Boeing Company and the Department of Defense signed a $76 million engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) contract last May to begin upgrading the U.S. Army's CH-47D Chinook fleet. Boeing will deliver the first production ICH Chinooks in 2003. At full production, the program will complete 26 modernized Chinooks each year through 2013.

"Boeing flew the first CH-47A in August 1959," said Charles Vehlow, vice president and general manager of Boeing Rotorcraft. "The initiation of this CH-47F program emphasizes the commitment by Boeing and our ICH industry partners to continue this legacy past the year 2030."

During EMD, the Boeing Rotorcraft Program Management Center in Philadelphia will modernize the first two aircraft, 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.

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 new T55-GA-714 standard. These new engines will provide increased lift and better fuel economy, ensuring that Chinooks remain fully capable of handling a full range of military transport missions.

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