Boeing Sikorsky Comanche Passes Major Milestone Review

The Boeing Sikorsky RAH-66 Comanche program won approval April 4 to begin its $3.1 billion engineering and manufacturing development phase. The new U.S. Army Aviation Modernization Plan also has recommended acquisition of more than 1,200 Comanche helicopters valued at nearly $34 billion over the production cycle of the program.

A Department of Defense Acquisition Board Milestone II assessment, an important step in a complex series of program reviews, certified that the Comanche program is properly planned and administered, has successfully completed all demonstration/validation phase program requirements, and may start EMD immediately after contract formalization.

"The Milestone II review and the Aviation Modernization Plan both are affirmations of Comanche's tremendous potential for enhancing the Army's future war-fighting capabilities," said Comanche Team Director Arthur Linden. "The program has met or exceeded every customer requirement, and we're now ready to establish a firm foundation for production, on schedule and on cost."

The Army and the Boeing Sikorsky Team already have agreed to all EMD program contract terms, permitting an early EMD startup. Linden said he expects the EMD contract will be awarded by June 1. "Defense Department and Army acquisition reforms made this acceleration possible," he said. "We will deliver a quality product to our Army customers more quickly and save taxpayer dollars in the process."

During EMD, the Comanche Team will test and qualify the aircraft's fully integrated digital Mission Equipment Package, deliver five new Comanches for EMD testing, and deliver eight aircraft to the Army for operational test and evaluation. The first U.S. Army Comanche unit will be equipped in 2006.

The RAH-66 Comanche, the U.S. Army's 21st century combat helicopter, is being developed by U.S. Army Aviation and a team of leading aerospace companies headed by The Boeing Company and Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation, a unit of United Technologies Corporation.

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