

Production Begins on New Boeing CH-47F Chinook for the U.S. Army

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Boeing [NYSE: BA] has started production for the new CH-47F Chinook heavy-transport helicopter as part of the U.S. Army Cargo Helicopter modernization program.

"The inclusion of the new airframe in the remanufacture program will greatly reduce required maintenance on the existing Chinook airframes, which in some cases are almost 40 years old," said Col. Tim Crosby, U.S. Army Product manager for the Chinook.

The new airframe is constructed utilizing advanced manufacturing techniques where large single piece components replace built-up sheet metal structures and aluminum honeycomb formers. These components reduce operating and support costs while improving the structural integrity of the aircraft, extending the overall useful life of each Chinook.

Structural improvements include air transportability modifications, which reduce time necessary to prepare the aircraft for cargo transport and advanced corrosion protection. In addition, the implementation of lean manufacturing processes on the factory floor and use of employee involvement teams have reduced manufacturing costs and improved production efficiency.

"Utilizing today's technology expands the range of improvements in this aircraft," said Jack Dougherty, Boeing Chinook program director. "This configuration with the Army's Common Aviation Architecture System cockpit makes the Chinook fully compliant with digital battlefield requirements and allows for greater and easier growth in systems."

Improved avionics provide enhanced situational awareness for flight crews with an advanced digital map display and a data transfer system, which allows storing preflight and mission data. The Digital Advanced Flight Control System (DAFCS) replaces the existing analog system, allowing future expansion. Survivability features include a Common Missile Warning and Improved Countermeasure Dispenser Systems.

Powered by Honeywell T55-GA-714A engines, the new aircraft has 4,868 horsepower from each of its twin engines, enabling it to reach speed in excess of 175 mph and provides the capability to transport up to 21,016 lbs. With its internal auxiliary fuel tanks, the CH-47F is capable of a mission radius greater than 400 miles.

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