Boeing Completes Demonstration Flights for Combat Search and Rescue Vehicle

The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] successfully completed a series of MH-47G demonstration flights for the U.S. Air Force at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, in support of its bid for the Air Force Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR-X) Program.

The flights, using the special operations variant of the Chinook helicopter demonstrated the capability of the aircraft to retrieve downed pilots, rescue injured air crew members and other CSAR mission scenarios.

"Our demonstration aircraft performed extremely well," said HH-47 proposal team leader Van Horn. "Our helicopter design already meets the Air Force's initial requirements and leverages significant past development efforts on the Chinook. Our assembly line has the capacity to deliver to the Air Force well ahead of the program's schedule. We think it is clear that the HH-47 is a leading contender for CSAR-X based on capability and value."

Conducted over three days, the demonstration exercise involved more than 20 hours of flight. The aircraft used in the demonstration was the MH-47G, the latest special operations helicopter, which is in active production. This model is a functional representation of the proposed HH-47 aircraft. The HH-47 CSAR helicopter will feature many of the capabilities of the special operations aircraft and offer other advanced systems and components to support combat search and rescue and related mission requirements the Air Force has specified. Air Force and Boeing pilots conducted the demonstration flights. Although the Air Force pilots had no previous H-47 flight experience, they quickly adapted to the aircraft and successfully performed the sorties without assistance.

Exercises included a series of hovers over land and water to evaluate downwash effects. Other CSAR mission scenarios performed were downed aircraft pilot pick-ups and extraction of injured personnel in litters. In addition to the test flights, Boeing provided a full-scale cabin mockup with an aircraft medical facility installed for evaluation. HH-47 cabin dimensions provide 6-ft 5-in. clearance, enabling crewmembers to handle patient treatment without bending or stooping.

Boeing submitted a proposal for the Air Force competition on Nov. 21. The Air Force is planning to select the competition winner for the program, involving 141 helicopters, in the spring of 2006.

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