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Ridley Township, Pa., Jan. 26, 2011 -- Representatives of Boeing [NYSE: BA], its suppliers and the Netherlands Ministry of Defence marked the first flight of the Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAf) CH-47F (NL) Chinook heavy-lift helicopter in a ceremony Jan. 25 at Summit Aviation in Middletown, Del.

The aircraft made its first flight on Dec. 8 and is scheduled to complete its flight test program in August after approximately 100 flight hours. There are two aircraft in flight test.

The RNLAf has ordered six CH-47F (NL) Chinooks to enhance its current fleet of 11 CH-47D (NL) aircraft. The new Chinooks are equipped with survivability equipment, a forward-looking infrared system, and fast rope positions, which will be used to support Special Forces operations. The engines will include air particle separators for operation in harsh environments. These additions will make the RNLAf CH-47F a versatile, multi-role aircraft for worldwide operations.

Boeing expects to begin delivering the aircraft later this year, making the RNLAf the first international customer to field the new CH-47F.

The flight tests have included assessments of the advanced operational capabilities enabled by the aircraft's Avionics Control and Management System cockpit and newly integrated Digital Automatic Flight Control System. By the conclusion of the tests, the aircraft will be certified airworthy by the Netherlands Military Aviation Authority.

"The Chinook has over the years proven itself to be a true workhorse for the Netherlands Air Force," said Air Commodore Theo ten Haaf, Commanding Officer Defence Helicopter Command of the RNLAf. "The aircraft proved to be 'the right tool' for a difficult and challenging job, especially in austere environments and during the combined air and ground operations in Afghanistan. Both ground troops and aircrew speak highly of it."

He added, "The CH-47F is a major improvement over the 47D model. The arrival of these new aircraft in the RNLAf will ensure that the RNLAf continues to operate with the best in the field of tactical transport helicopter operations both now and in the future."

"Our goal is to use available technology to provide customers with the best solutions while enabling long-term sustainability," said Leanne Caret, H-47 Programs vice president for Boeing. "We have a long-standing relationship with the Netherlands and this new aircraft is another example of our focus on providing advanced solutions to meet our customers' growing demands."

The Netherlands MOD and Boeing also are evaluating a potential upgrade of the current CH-47D (NL) Chinook fleet to the new CH-47F (NL) configuration.

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