

Support Systems team keeps UK Chinooks flying

By MADONNA WALSH

The short definition of “operational”: fit, ready for use. For UK air crews that fly the Mk2 version of Boeing Chinook helicopters in hostile situations, it implies a lot more.

It means the integrity of the aircraft isn't an issue. It means the aircraft should be absolutely reliable, its systems should work in the most extreme conditions, and it should be able to perform perilous missions effectively.

Toward this end, the Boeing UK Chinook Through Life Customer Support team provides engineering technical support, heavy maintenance, component repairs and upgrade services for the aircraft, enabling their military customer to perform frontline duties effectively and efficiently around the clock. Since the introduction of TLCS in 2006, the Boeing team and its partners have reduced the number of cycle days for major maintenance by nearly 20 percent, with a goal of 27 percent reduction this spring. For minor maintenance they achieved their 2007 year-end goal of a 40 percent reduction in cycle time.

“[Under the TLCS partnership] we've promised to have 27 Chinooks available to the Royal Air Force 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” said James O'Loughlin, Boeing Programme Director, UK Chinook TLCS Programme. The requirement to have 27 out of the RAF's 40 Chinooks be available demands strong performance.

Each day, the needs of the UK Chinook fleet are transmitted to the TLCS team. The team performs regularly scheduled maintenance on aircraft as well as repair of aircraft that have been damaged in operations.

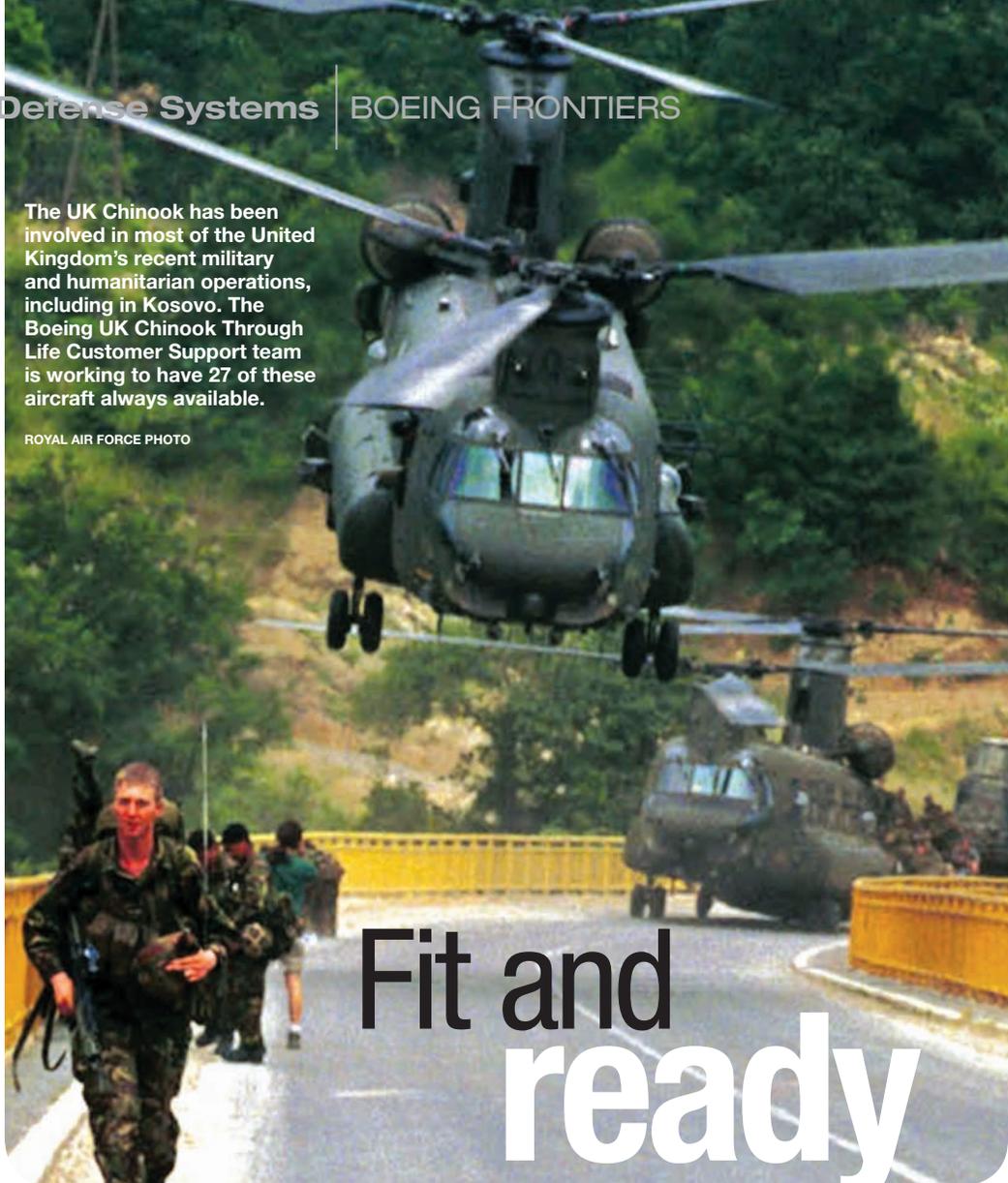
The TLCS network includes teammates across the UK, from Gosport and Royal Air Force (base) Odiham in the south, to Perth, Scotland, in the north—and the Boeing site in Philadelphia.

Main operations are housed at Vector Aerospace Fleetlands in Gosport. In most cases, Boeing employees are colocated with their military customer and partners, which has been vital to the team's success.

“Having Boeing on site has cut overall repair time in half for aircraft damaged in

The UK Chinook has been involved in most of the United Kingdom's recent military and humanitarian operations, including in Kosovo. The Boeing UK Chinook Through Life Customer Support team is working to have 27 of these aircraft always available.

ROYAL AIR FORCE PHOTO



Fit and ready

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— Group Captain Andy Turner, UK Chinook Force Commander and RAF Odiham Station Commander

operations,” said Group Captain Mark Sibley, Chinook Integrated Project Team leader.

“There's a profound difference in the level of support [provided for Chinooks] since the introduction of TLCS,” said Group Captain Andy Turner, the UK Chinook Force Commander and RAF Odiham Station Commander. “Today, every person at every level is fully engaged. It makes all the difference in the world.” ■

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TLCS happens here

Through Life Customer Support work for the UK Chinook program is taking place at the following locations:

Vector Aerospace Almondbank, formerly Defence Aviation Repair Agency Almondbank, or DARA Almondbank Perth, Scotland

Royal Air Force (base) Odiham (RAF Odiham) Hampshire, England

Vector Aerospace Fleetlands, formerly DARA Fleetlands Gosport, England

The Boeing Company Philadelphia

Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton (RNAS Yeovilton) Yeovilton, England