

# Ready to go... *again*

## Boeing confident its HH-47 remains best solution for U.S. Air Force's combat search and rescue needs

By JENNA McMULLIN

**A**s it awaits the forthcoming decision on the U.S. Air Force's Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR-X) aircraft contract award, the Boeing Rotorcraft team remains confident that its HH-47 aircraft provides the best-value solution for meeting the customer's needs.

CSAR-X is an initiative to replace the U.S. Air Force's existing combat search-and-rescue aircraft with 141 new helicopters featuring a modernized, more capable platform. Boeing is offering the HH-47, which builds on the achievements of the Chinook—an aircraft with 46 years of combat service as well as search, rescue and humanitarian missions worldwide.

The Air Force originally selected Boeing for the \$10 billion contract in November 2006. However, the Government Accountability Office sustained competitor protests on the calculation of life-cycle costs. The re-opened competition allowed competitors, including Boeing, to adjust their proposals. The contract award decision is expected by the end of October.

The HH-47 is an advanced derivative of the Chinook helicopter. It offers the benefits of the Army's CH-47 and the Special Operation Command's MH-47 with minor upgrades in order to fulfill the Air Force's CSAR mission needs at low risk. With the largest cabin size, highest operating altitude, lowest downwash velocity and most lift capacity of all competitors, the HH-47 provides CSAR crews with enhanced flexibility for demanding missions.

"We are proud of the lineage of the H-47 platform," said Rick Lemaster, HH-47 program manager. "Countless lives have been saved thanks to the Chinook's decades of service in war, humanitarian aid, disaster relief and firefighting."

U.S. warfighters who have had experience with the newest models of the Chinook vouch for this aircraft's capabilities.

"This aircraft is light-years ahead in flight-management systems compared with our older aircraft," said Col. Patrick Tierney, commander, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division based at Fort Hood, Texas.

The CH-47F was certified combat-ready in July 2007. Tierney's unit deployed to Iraq in June 2008, making it the first CH-47F unit to operate the aircraft in combat. The unit reported the aircraft excelled in every way, from achieving an exceptional operational readiness rate to providing the crews increased situational awareness and improved safety features.

Boeing Rotorcraft representatives dispute critics' claims that because the HH-47 is based on an aircraft that's more than 40 years old, it won't be technologically advanced. "The Chinook's achievements in



The HH-47, Boeing's entrant in the U.S. Air Force's Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR-X) aircraft contract award, features technologies that give the pilot vital information needed during a rescue scenario.

GRAPHIC BY JOE NAUJOKAS/BOEING

ongoing combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate the evolution of the H-47 platform throughout its 40-plus years in worldwide operations," said Chuck Allen, vice president and general manager, Rotorcraft Systems. "The notion that the HH-47 is a dated helicopter is absolutely laughable. You can't ignore the innovation and state-of-the-art advances made in battlespace mapping, threat suppression, net-centric operations and just plain performance."

Also feeding Rotorcraft Systems' confidence in this competition is the aircraft's suitability to the search-and-rescue mission.

According to Mark Ballew, a retired career Army Chinook pilot and now a senior manager in Tandem Rotor Systems, the tandem rotor aircraft provides numerous advantages over a single rotor aircraft, including greater stability in high winds, less dependence on wind direction, a larger center of gravity, and speed. In fact, the Chinook is the fastest helicopter in the Army inventory. All power in the Chinook goes towards lift, which allows the helicopter to operate at altitudes above 14,000 feet (4,270 meters) with a payload of 3,000 pounds (1,360 kilograms).

"The H-47 is clearly the best platform for the search-and-rescue mission because it is the best platform for high altitude or high wind missions. If you think about it, most rescues occur in the mountains or during extreme weather conditions," Ballew said.

"I have never been in a scenario where a Chinook couldn't handle the mission," said Lt. Col. Walter Bradley of the 158th Aviation Regiment during deployments to Pakistan and Afghanistan. ■

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