

Navy Closing in on Training Copter Award



Leonardo's TH-119 is in the running for the Navy's new training helicopter. Leonardo-Finmeccanica NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The Navy is on track to award a contract for its new training helicopter by the end of this calendar year, and Leonardo Helicopters believes it is in a great position to win that competition, Andrew Gappy, director of the firm's Navy and Marine Corps programs, said May 7.

Leonardo is offering the TH-119, a modified version of its widely used commercial helicopter, which is serving as a trainer for the Portuguese Air Force and Israel, Gappy said. A former Marine helicopter pilot, Gappy said the 119 has the advantage of being the only one of the three competitors that is made in America, at Leonardo's full-service plant in Philadelphia. It also has a rugged, nearly all metal airframe that can take the rough handling commonly endured by training aircraft and has a single engine, which will reduce the long-term maintenance and operating cost, he said.

Also competing to replace the Navy's current TH-57, which is used to train helicopter pilots for the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, are Airbus, with its

twin-engine

H-235P3, and Bell Helicopters, with the 407 GXi, an updated version of the Bell 206, which was the basis for the TH-57.

Gappy said all three firms have submitted their proposals, which are being evaluated by the Navy. The contract required an in-service helicopter, a ground training system and a long-term sustainment proposal with projected cost. The winner will produce 130 aircraft in five years, with the first five due by the end of the fiscal 2020.

Gappy said the TH-119 proposal was crafted with input from a team of former military helicopter pilots. It is the highest power-rated single-engine helo in the U.S., meets all of the Navy's requirement and offers a low sustainment cost. "It's not just what the airplane can do; it's the affordability of the airplane," he said.