

Navy Orders 9 CH-53K Helicopters for Marine Corps



The CH-53K King Stallion executing night vision goggle helicopter aerial refueling. *U.S. NAVY / Dane Wiedmann*

NAVAL AIR STATION PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – A contract to build nine CH-53K King Stallion helicopters with an additional contract option for nine more aircraft was awarded to Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, on June 25, Naval Air Systems Command said in a release.

The low-rate initial production (LRIP) fiscal 2021 Lot 5 contract will deliver nine aircraft in 2024 as part of a 200-aircraft program of record for the U.S. Marine Corps. The Lot 5 contract contains an option for Lot 6, for an additional nine aircraft with a contract award in FY22.

“This contract award is a testament to the hard work and dedication from the team to execute this critical program in support of the U.S. Marine Corps’ heavy lift requirement,” said Col. Jack Perrin, heavy lift helicopter program manager.

The Lot 5 contract is for \$878.7 million, bringing the Sikorsky element of the aircraft cost of those nine aircraft to \$97.6 million each. The Lot 6 aircraft cost reduces to \$94.7 million each, for a Lot 6 total contract cost of \$852.5 million. These costs do not include engine and other government furnished equipment.

The fiscal 2021 Lot 5 and 2022 Lot 6 contracts represent an average unit airframe cost reduction of \$7.4 million from fiscal 2020 Lot 4 to FY22 Lot 6.

The program will start initial operational test and evaluation (IOT&E) in July 2021 and is poised to support the Marine Corps’ declaration of initial operational capability. In

preparation for commencement of IOT&E, three System Demonstration Test Article aircraft are currently being operated by the Marine Corps' Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron One, VMX-1, at Marine Corps Air Station New River, North Carolina.

"As the long-range logistic support backbone for the U.S. Marine Corps, it is essential that we get this critical capability to the fleet as quickly and as affordably as possible," said Perrin.

The Lot 5 award brings the program total aircraft, either delivered or on contract, to 33.