

Navy Orders Additional TH-73A Helicopters to Train Naval Aviators



A Leonardo TH-73A helicopter. *LEONARDO*

PHILADELPHIA – The newly established partnership between Leonardo and the U.S. Navy on the advanced training of next-generation helicopter pilots grew in December with the U.S. Department of Defense buying an additional 36 TH-73A rotorcraft, with initial spares, for \$159.4 million, the company announced Dec. 22.

This third lot brings the total number of aircraft on order to 104 of the total requirement for 130, with delivery continuing into 2024. The fleet will be used to collectively train student pilots from the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, along several NATO allies.

In January 2020, Leonardo, through AgustaWestland Philadelphia Corp., was awarded a firm-fixed-price contract valued at \$176 million for the production and delivery of an initial 32 TH-73A helicopters. The agreement – which included an initial package of spares, support, dedicated equipment, and specific pilot and maintenance training services – was confirmed that following November through the order of a second lot of aircraft through a \$171 million contract modification for an additional 36 helicopters.

All TH-73As will be fully produced at the Leonardo's plant in Philadelphia where the AW119 is exclusively built on an FAA Certified Part 21 production line. The site operates today as a supplier and partner to the U.S. DoD through the TH-73A program for the U.S. Navy, of which Leonardo is prime contractor, in addition to the Boeing MH-139A program for the

U.S. Air Force.

Located in Philadelphia since the early 1980s, the plant today employs 700 of Leonardo's 7,000 employees active in the U.S. and has become a Divisional Center of Excellence for production, support, engineering and training activities. The Philadelphia site includes production of the AW119, AW139 and the AW609 tilt-rotor, as well as support, maintenance and repair services. Pilot and maintenance technician training is performed at the training academy, co-located at the same campus as all other U.S. functions, which was inaugurated earlier this year as part of an \$80 million dollar expansion.

A delivery ceremony for the first TH-73A to the U.S. Navy took place in June 2021 in Philadelphia. Based on the IFR instrument flight rules variant of the commercial model AW119Kx, the TH-73A, which will replace the TH-57B/C Sea Ranger first introduced in 1968, is perfectly suited for both initial and advanced training.

Equipped with a powerful and reliable Pratt & Whitney PT-6 engine and characterized by dual safety and hydraulic systems and advanced digital avionics by Genesys Aerosystems, the TH-73 can perform every phase of the U.S. Navy's training program without compromise. The new system will allow the U.S. Navy to upgrade its technologies from analogue to digital and is expected to be in service until after 2050.

The fleet will be based at Naval Air Station Whiting Field in Milton, Florida. After being awarded the initial contract and in order to support the fleet once operational, Leonardo announced plans to build a 100,000 square foot support center immediately adjacent to NAS Whiting Field in partnership with the City of Milton, Santa Rosa County and Space Florida. Site work has already begun and the facility's completion is expected by the end of 2023.