

VH-71 Presidential Helicopter Fleet Replacement Program (formerly the VXX program)

Executive Summary

- The VH-71 is the replacement for existing presidential helicopters.
- Perceived urgency drives the program.
- Increment 1 will provide seven test articles and five slightly modified pilot production aircraft in the near term.
- Increment 2 will provide the remaining 18 production aircraft in 2015.

System

- The VH-71 aircraft replaces the current U.S. Marine Corps fleet of 11 VH-3D and 8 VH-60N Helicopters flown by Marine Helicopter Squadron-One to perform the Presidential lift mission.
- The VH-71 is a dual-piloted, multi-engine helicopter based on the Eurocopter EH-101.
- It is intended to be capable of operating worldwide in day, night, or adverse weather conditions.
- The communications system will provide the ability to simultaneously conduct short- and long-range secure and non-secure voice, data, and video communications. It can also exchange situational awareness information with outside agencies, organizations, and supporting aircraft.
- Procurement of Increment 1 aircraft will include seven test articles and five pilot production (low-rate initial production) aircraft.
- Procurement of Increment 2 aircraft will include ten low-rate initial production aircraft and eight full-rate production



aircraft. If it proves impractical to retrofit the five pilot production aircraft, five more production aircraft will be added at the end of Increment 2 production.

Mission

- Provide safe and timely transport of the President and Vice President of the United States, Foreign Heads of State, and other parties as directed by the Director of the White House Military Office.
- The VH-71 is required to operate from commercial airports, military airfields, Navy ships, and austere sites throughout the world.

Activity

- Little flight testing has been conducted beyond preliminary antenna pattern and downwash developmental testing on leased, pre-production EH-101 prototypes. The first test articles will be delivered in mid-FY07.
- An LFT&E Strategy has been approved and testing has begun.
- The Navy has formed an integrated test team at the principal flight test facility at Naval Air Warfare Center, Patuxent River, Maryland. This team includes operational test personnel from the test and user squadron, Marine Helicopter Squadron One.

Assessment

- Intense schedule pressure to replace the current VH-3 aircraft threatens to reduce the amount of testing possible before fielding the Increment 1 aircraft in October 2009. Increment 1 aircraft will be less capable than those of Increment 2.
- The current design is overweight. Increment 1 performance will likely fall short of required range and airspeed.

- As capabilities are dropped from the Increment 1 configuration, it becomes ever more likely that those five low-rate initial production aircraft will not be useful for the Presidential Support mission and will have to be replaced.
- DOT&E is working with the program office and Integrated Test Team to maximize test efficiency without degrading future mission capabilities. The program is considering a new schedule for Increment 2 that addresses DOT&E concerns.

Recommendations

- Status of Previous Recommendations. DOT&E did not submit an FY05 report on VH-71.
- FY06 Recommendation.
 1. The program should execute the VH-71 program on an event-based, rather than a schedule-driven, basis.

NAVY PROGRAMS