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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ROTORCRAFT HEARING

STATEMENT OF: MAJOR GENERAL STANLEY GORENC  
DIRECTOR, OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY REQUIREMENTS  
DCS, AIR, SPACE & INFORMATION  
OPERATIONS, PLANS & REQUIREMENTS

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## **Introduction**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss Air Force future helicopter requirements, current rotary wing fleet health, and future investments with you and your subcommittee today. This topic is particularly important to the Air Force as we move forward with our recapitalization plans. I am proud to say the United States Air Force has a long and successful history with its rotary wing fleet, conducting Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR), Special Operations, and critical missions for Homeland Security -- such as vital infrastructure protection, continuity of government and support to the National Search and Rescue Plan. USAF helicopter forces, assigned to both the Special Operations and CSAR mission areas, have proven their value time and time again. They have served with distinction in ongoing Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM combat operations, Hurricane Katrina rescue efforts, and in other relief operations such as in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in the Philippines.

USAF SOF helicopter assets are a critical part of the United States Special Operations Command's joint combat capability. These assets form part of the Air Force's specialized air power team which works hand-in-hand in a complex and integrated role with their Army Green Beret and Navy SEAL counterparts to take the fight to the enemy through infiltration, exfiltration, and re-supply missions in denied areas. These assets remain highly engaged and utilized and are critical in the ongoing Global War on Terror (GWOT).

While all services have the capability to recover their own personnel, USAF CSAR forces currently maintain the only dedicated all weather non-permissive rescue

capability on 24/7 alert. This unique war and peacetime capability place them in high demand and keep them continuously employed on a global basis.

In addition to our OIF, OEF, and other global commitments, USAF helicopter forces also distinguished themselves in a Homeland Security role supporting Hurricane Katrina and Rita rescue and relief operations. In response to these critical disaster operations, the USAF was able to quickly deploy and immediately begin rescue and relief operations under the command of our 347<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing. Thirty-eight USAF helicopters and aircrews from across the spectrum of USAF mission areas were rapidly pressed into service in rescue and relief operations including five MH-53s from Hurlburt Field, 10 UH-1Ns from Malmstrom, Minot, and Vandenburg, and Eglin AFB, and 23 Active, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Combat Search and Rescue HH-60 assets from Moody, Patrick, Nellis, Gabreski and Davis-Monthan AFBs.

These USAF helicopters were key in providing the vast majority of the 5,544 “lives saved” credited to USAF forces. These efforts highlight the capability and responsiveness of USAF rotary wing forces and the quality and dedication of the USAF aircrew, maintenance, and support personnel.

### **Future Air Force Helicopter requirements**

Currently, the CSAR-X is the only future Air Force helicopter program of record. CSAR-X, a new USAF acquisition program, will replace the aging HH-60G helicopters with 141 new medium-lift aircraft. The primary mission of the CSAR-X is Combat Search and Rescue.

Thirty-one Air Force Special Operations MH-53s are currently scheduled to phase out and be retired. The Air Force will divest this asset and acquire the CV-22, a tilt-rotor aircraft that will provide new GWOT capability to SOCOM. The CV-22 is an advanced platform that will insert SOF forces at longer distances and at greatly increased speeds. It will use Terrain Following Radar along with advanced defensive radar and infrared countermeasures. It enables SOF personnel to perform very long-range SOF missions in “one period of darkness.”

The UH-1N’s primary mission includes maintaining non-stop alert for nuclear missile field security and for peace and wartime support of the National Capital Region. As noted earlier, it also played a critical role supporting hurricane relief efforts. The UH-1Ns have an average age of 36 years and have shortfalls in speed, range, passenger capacity, all-weather capability, and defensive systems. These shortfalls necessitate that we look toward replacing these aging assets. The Air Force is currently conducting an Analysis of Alternatives to determine the most cost effective way ahead to continue to fill this critical capability requirement in the future.

### **Current health/condition of the helicopter fleet**

The current inventory of helicopters, including 101 HH-60s, 31 MH-53s, and 62 UH-1Ns, are critical to the success of CSAR, Special Operations, and Homeland Security missions. However, extensive taskings are resulting in high usage and stress of the entire rotary wing fleet with availability rates suffering. As an example, in the first quarter FY06, the HH-60 fleet had an availability rate of 57% while the MH-53s were at 54%. These rates were similar in FY05 and were in part driven by our increased

operations in very demanding environments. The UH-1Ns operated at an availability rate of 70% in FY05 and have continued at the same rate in the first quarter FY06. Despite the slightly higher availability rate, the UH-1N's inherent shortfalls in meeting operational requirements in many of its mission areas is a continuing challenge. Overall, the aging helicopter fleet suffers from high usage and shortfalls in capabilities--resulting in increased operational risk to the warfighter.

### **Future investments in the helicopter fleet**

CSAR-X is the planned replacement vehicle for the USAF fleet of HH-60G helicopters. Total program investment will be approximately \$10-12B. Although a Combat Rescue Analysis of Alternatives completed in March 2005 recommended 170 medium lift aircraft, the AF decided to accept moderate risk and proposes a fleet of 141 medium lift aircraft to meet our CSAR needs. The acquisition strategy to achieve this is an incremental development approach. The FY07 President's Budget will support the initial interim capable/Block 0 CSAR-X aircraft, which will be at Initial Operating Capability (IOC) by 2012. The budget also adds \$849.4M across the FYDP to get the full mission capable/Block 10 CSAR-X to IOC by 2018.

The CV-22, a program of approximately \$6B, will provide greatly increased capability for Special Operations Forces. The CV-22 has performed successfully in testing and is currently in full rate production. The procurement and investment for the CV-22 provides full operational capability in FY17. SOCOM has requested that this critical capability be fielded as soon as possible. To that end, should additional funds become available, the Air Force has included the CV-22 as one of a number of aircraft

in our unfunded priorities for FY07. This would provide the initial funds needed to accelerate CV-22 full operational capability by as much as three years.

The Common Vertical Lift Support Platform (CVLSP) is a developing need that is exploring options for recapitalization of our aging UH-1N fleet of 62 aircraft. The Air Force is currently conducting an Analysis of Alternatives that will inform senior leaders on the most cost effective way ahead, and could include various replacement options.

### **Conclusion**

We continue to work diligently in meeting critical CSAR, Special Operations, and Homeland Security needs for the future. The CSAR-X is a clear commitment to an Air Force core mission. It will replace the aging “low density/high demand” HH-60 with sufficient numbers of aircraft that have the capabilities required by the warfighter. Full rate production of the CV-22 is a crucial first step to increasing Special Operations capability in the ongoing GWOT. Finally, the Air Force recognizes the capability gap presented by our aging UH-1Ns and will continue to aggressively analyze solutions for recapitalization. For America to hold its military advantage, the Air Force must continue to maintain and improve its CSAR, Special Operations, and Homeland Security capabilities. As always, we appreciate your support in turning this critical need into an operational reality.