

CH-53K King Stallion successfully completes initial operational testing



U.S. Marine Corps aircrew load a High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle onto a CH-53K King Stallion with ease during the two-week initial operational test (OT-B1) conducted at Sikorsky's Flight Center in West Palm Beach, Fla. OT-B1 successfully completed Oct. 19. Photo courtesy Sikorsky

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The U.S. Marine Corps' [CH-53K King Stallion](#) helicopter completed its two-week initial operational test period, called OT-B1, Oct. 19 at the Sikorsky Development Flight Center in West Palm Beach, Florida.

OT-B1 included multiple external lift scenarios of 27,000 lb. (12,200 kg) in-hover and 12,000 lb. (5,422 kg) 110 nautical mile radius missions. Ground events included embarkation/debarkation of combat equipped troops, internal and external cargo rigging, tactical bulk fuel delivery system (TBFDS) operation, and medivac litter configuration.

“OT-B1 is a critical milestone for the program because this is the first time an operational test has been done utilizing an “All Marine” crew,” said [Col. Hank Vanderborght](#), U.S. Marine Corps program manager for the Naval Air Systems Command's Heavy Lift Helicopters program, PMA-261. “All test objectives were met, and the aircraft performed very well. This further increases our confidence in the design, and is another key step to successfully fielding the CH-53K.”

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With four aircraft in test, the CH-53K has logged over 200 cumulative flight hours to date. Initial operational capability continues on pace for 2019 and is defined as having four aircraft, with combat-ready crews, logistically prepared to deploy. Milestone C review for entry into low-rate initial production is anticipated in second quarter of fiscal year 2017.

The U.S. Department of Defense's Program of Record remains at 200 CH-53K aircraft. The U.S. Marine Corps intends to stand up eight active duty squadrons, one training squadron, and one reserve squadron to support operational requirements.



U.S. Marine Corps pilots maneuver a CH-53K King Stallion as it delivers a 12,000 pound external load after completing a 110 nautical mile mission during the two-week initial operational test (OT-B1) conducted at Sikorsky's Flight Center in West Palm Beach, Fla. OT-B1 successfully completed Oct. 19. Photo courtesy Sikorsky