

CH-53K King Stallion: 10 Years since First Flight



[From Naval Air Systems Command](#)

NAS PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – October 27, 2015 –The CH-53K King Stallion took to the skies for its first flight. Today, more than 10 years later, there are 20 CH-53Ks executing missions with four different Navy and Marine Corps squadrons.

The CH-53K, which will deploy for the first time in fiscal year 2027, achieved Initial Operational Capability in April 2022 and entered full rate production the following November. The only heavy lift helicopter in the U.S. military, the King Stallion can lift 36,000 pounds; refuel mid-air; provide ship-to-shore mobility and maneuverability along with multiple other assault support missions.

According to Col. Kate Fleeger, Program Manager, H-53 Heavy

Lift Helicopters Program Office (PMA-261), the CH-53K will be used to ensure forces remain agile and supported, sustaining operations and maintaining a forward presence on the battlefield.

“With its unique capability to lift all Marine Corps air-transportable equipment from ship-to-shore, the CH-53K will play a crucial role in rapidly and flexibly deploying forces and supplies, supporting Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations and Distributed Air Operations concepts, and ultimately enabling the Marine Corps to project power and sustain its presence with greater speed and agility,” she said.

The Marine Corps plans to procure 200 CH-53Ks and the program office recently entered a [five-year, multi-year contract](#) with Sikorsky to purchase up to 99 more helicopters.

“We will be equipping six active-duty squadrons, one reserve squadron, two test squadrons and a training squadron with the CH-53K as the Marine Corps transitions from the CH-53E Super Stallion,” said Fleeger. “The full changeover is expected to be completed in FY32.”

PMA-261 manages the cradle to grave procurement, development, support, fielding and disposal of the entire family of H-53 heavy lift helicopters.