

CH-53K Program 'Actively Working With Israel' to Send 18 Helos by Mid-2020s



U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Michael S. Cederholm flies the CH-53K "King Stallion" at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, June 12, 2021. U.S. MARINE CORPS / Cpl. Yuritzy Gomez

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The U.S. government has approved a sale of 18 CH-53K heavy-lift helicopters to Israel, and the program hopes to get them to Israel by the mid-2020s, according to an official.

The U.S. State Department cleared the \$3.4 billion sale just a few days ago. Col. Jack Perrin, program manager for H-53 helicopters (PMA-261), said Tuesday during the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space expo in National Harbor, Maryland, that while it depends on the eventual contract with Israel, "I believe it'll be the 2025-26 timeframe before they actually get delivered to Israel.

"But again the schedule is in flux until we get on contract," Perrin added. "We are actively working with Israel on defining that and getting us all to an agreeable place."

The helicopters will replace some of Israel's fleet of CH-53D Yasur aircraft, some of which are up to 50 years old. The contract covers 12 CH-53Ks with an option for six more.

Bill Falk, manager of the CH-53K helicopter program at Sikorsky, said he was "very excited" that Israel had selected the CH-53K.

Asked whether the country could buy more, Perrin said the buy was limited to 18, but Israel can always request more.

“If they would like more, we’d have to go back and talk to Congress about allowing them to purchase more,” Perrin said.

Some lawmakers have bristled at the sale of arms to Israel after the country’s bombardment of Gaza and settlements in the West Bank. Multiple Democrats tried unsuccessfully to block an arms sale to Israel back in May that included Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs), which may have been used in strikes on targets in Gaza in May that resulted in the deaths of around 200 Palestinians over the course of a week, according to reports.

Israel’s fleet of CH-53Ds are used for long-range heavy assault and insertion of special operations teams, among other missions.