Leonardo celebrates delivery of 100th TH-73A thrasher to the US Navy



PHILDELPHIA, 17 September 2024 – Leonardo celebrated a significant milestone with the 100th delivery of the TH-73A Thrasher helicopter to the United States Navy on September 17 at a ceremony in Northeast Philadelphia. Attendees included Vice Adm. Daniel L. Cheever, Commander, Naval Air Forces/Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Lt. Gen. Bradford Gering, Deputy Commandant for Aviation for the U.S. Marine Corps, along with a crowd of over one hundred dignitaries representing government, military, and nonprofit institutions.

In early 2020, the Navy selected the Leonardo TH-73A, an advanced Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) rated version of the

commercial AW119Kx, to replace its aging fleet of TH-57B/C Sea Rangers as the primary training helicopter to produce the next generation of rotary and tilt-rotor pilots for the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and selected allied nations.

“We’re proud to continue to provide our contribution to the Navy as it aims at delivering the highest level of quality for their next generation naval aviators’ training,” said Gian Piero Cutillo, Managing Director of Leonardo Helicopters. “We’re committed to sustaining this capability with our technology to make sure our partners’ needs are met as frontline capabilities and operational requirements keep evolving.”

“We are thrilled to deliver the 100th TH-73 to our esteemed U.S. Navy partners,” said Clyde Woltman, Chief Executive Officer of Leonardo Helicopters U.S. “This production milestone is a testament to all the collaboration and hard work between our organizations, and we remain focused on preparing for the fleet’s readiness for decades to come.”

The TH-73A Advanced Helicopter Training System represents a pivotal modernization in Navy helicopter training technology, shifting from analog to digital avionics, and is projected to serve the U.S. Navy through 2050 and beyond. This enhanced training capability will help maintain the highest standard of military flight training with current and relevant training platforms. The TH-73A will facilitate a higher quality and more proficient naval aviator who will be ready to meet the operational challenges faced in the fleet.

“The advanced capability of the TH-73 Thrasher is a great training addition for our warfighters,” said Vice Adm. Daniel Cheever, Commander Naval Air Forces. “This means our newest Naval Aviators arrive ready to preserve the peace, respond in crisis, and win in war.”

TH-73A’s advanced design, based on the IFR-certified variant

of the commercial AW119Kx, sets it apart as the ideal selection for initial flight training with the capacity to support advanced operational maneuvers. The helicopter is powered by a robust Pratt & Whitney PT-6 engine and features dual safety and hydraulic systems, ensuring reliability and safety during all aspects of flight operations. With modern digital avionics provided by Genesys Aerosystems, the Thrasher excels in every maneuver within the Navy's training program and expanded the training syllabi, facilitating a seamless transition from fundamental flying activities to complex operational training.

Training by the numbers

As of mid-August, the Navy's advanced helicopter training syllabus is currently comprised of more than 317 total Student Naval Aviators (SNAs), of which 185, or 58%, are currently in the TH-73A training curriculum. This number is projected to peak at 66% when the second of three squadrons complete the transition this fall. The third and final squadron, Helicopter Training Squadron (HT) 28, is expected to begin the transition to the TH-73 later this year.

In addition, the commitment to flight training is unwavering, evidenced by the safe and effective execution of more than 43,000 flight hours flown in support of the Navy's training requirements. To support the dynamic training environment, 133 Training Air Wing (TW) 5 instructor pilots have been qualified in the TH-73A, comprised of 86 conversion instructors and 47 new Instructors Under Training (IUTs). Many additional IUTs continue to hone their skills within the helicopter instructor training unit. The program also benefits from the expertise of eight contract maintenance provider Functional Check Pilots who have been qualified in the model in direct support of the program. More than 200 SNAs have completed the TH-73A syllabus and been winged Naval Aviators to date.