Leonardo's Contender for U.S. Navy Training Helicopter Performs First Flight

ROME – Leonardo has successfully completed the initial flight test of the TH-119 instrument flight rules (IFR) training helicopter Dec. 20, the company said in a release.

The TH-119, Leonardo's bid to replace the U.S. Navy's aging fleet of TH-57 Sea Ranger training helicopters, is a variant of the successful AW119, manufactured in the United States with strong local supplier base. By completing this important milestone, the TH-119 remains on track to achieve full FAA IFR certification early this year, making it the only single-engine IFR-certified helicopter in production in decades.

The TH-119 was flown by Leonardo pilot Patrick McKernan at the company's Philadelphia plant where all variants of AW119s are built. The helicopter performed excellently during the flight which included an assessment of general handling and avionics systems. If selected by the U.S. Navy, a fleet of over 125 TH-119s will be built in Philadelphia utilizing the plant's existing AW119 manufacturing and support facility.

"Already made in USA, the TH-119 is an affordable, off-the-shelf teaching helicopter that combines proven performance, flexibility and safety," said Andrew Gappy, Leonardo director of U.S. government sales. "It is built to accomplish every current Navy undergraduate training mission and flight skill maneuver with plenty of room to grow over the venerable TH-57."

A variant of the successful AW119 specifically configured for military training, the TH-119 is the only modern single-engine helicopter certified to operate in actual instrument conditions, resulting in more available training days. The

TH-119 is a full-spectrum training helicopter, meaning that with a single-variant configuration the Navy can accomplish fundamental training flights like sliding landings, hovering and full autorotations (without offloading any of them to simulation) equally as well as advanced training flights including NVG, instruments, navigation, tactics, hoist, external cargo and search and rescue.

The TH-119’s dual-display Genesys Aerosystems advanced glass cockpit allows instruction from either pilot seat with full IFR capabilities including flight director and 3-axis full autopilot. Its unique 180-degree adjustable observer seat offers student pilots full view of the cockpit providing a better learning environment even while riding as a passenger. The TH-119 combines exceptional power margins, thanks to its popular and reliable 1,000-shaft-horsepower Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6-B engine, with the durability of a cocoon-type metal airframe and reinforced shock stabilized skids for touchdown maneuver training. To minimize time on the ground and maximize operational flexibility the TH-119 can “hot” pressure refuel.