

Marine Corps Looking at Future Light Helicopter Replacement



The Marine Corps hopes to field the successor to the UH-1Y Venom, shown here, and the AH-1Z Viper in the late 2020s or early 2030s. MARINE CORPS / Cpl. Sabrina Candiaflores

NATIONAL

HARBOR, Md. – The Marine Corps and the Army are running an analysis of

alternatives (AOA) to see whether the two services can meet the same requirements

for Milestone A or B start in fiscal 2021, a Marine helicopter acquisition

official said. The AOA is expected to be complete in the “next couple of months.”

Speaking May

6 to an audience at the Navy League’s Sea-Air-Space Expo in National Harbor,

Maryland, Marine Col. David C. Walsh, program manager for Marine light attack

helicopters, said the Marine Corps has begun studies for its Attack Utility

Replacement Aircraft to succeed the UH-1Y Venom and AH-1Z Viper helicopters.

The Corps

hopes to field the Future Vertical Lift Capabilities Set 3 by the late 2020s or

early 2030s, Walsh said.

A key

requirement for the Marine Corps is an aircraft that can keep

up with or even
exceed the speed of an MV-22B Osprey, 310 knots.

Bell

Helicopter delivered the last of 160 UH-1Ys in April 2018 and has delivered 111 of 189 AH-1Zs to date. The last AH-1Z deliveries are scheduled for 2022.

Bahrain and Pakistan also have purchased AH-1Zs, while Turkey and Taiwan have procured the older AH-1W.

Walsh said

that there is considerable foreign military sales potential for the UH-1Y and AH-1Z. He listed potential for 88 AH-1Zs and 29 UH-1Ys in Europe, 129 AH-1Zs in the Asia-Pacific region, and 44 AH-1Zs and 24 UH-1Ys in the Middle East and North Africa.

Walsh also

said his office is working on capability upgrades to the Corps' H-1 fleet, including Link 16, full-motion video, the Joint Air-Ground Missile, and the AIM-9X Sidewinder air-to-air missile, as well as some navigational upgrades.