Navy awards contract to buy multi-engine training system aircraft

A T-44C Pegasus (above) stands on the flightline aboard Naval Air Station Corpus Christi before a scheduled flight. The T-54A will replace the T-44C aircraft currently used by the U.S. Navy to train student naval aviators. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by 1st Lt. Pawel Puczko/Released)

Release from Naval Air Systems

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New training aircraft will equip pilots across the services for tomorrow's battlespace

The U.S. Navy announced on Jan. 25 that it awarded Textron Aviation a single, firm-fixed-price contract to develop the T-54A multi-engine training system (METS) aircraft. The T-54A will provide advanced instrument and asymmetric engine handling training to student naval aviators selected for multi-engine fleet communities.

“The new METS aircraft will give us the ability to train pilots across the services with an advanced platform that better represents fleet aircraft,” said Capt. Holly Shoger, Naval Undergraduate Flight Training Systems Program Office (PMA-273) program manager. “The T-54A will include the latest avionics and navigational updates, such as virtual reality and augmented reality devices, to ensure pilots are ready to face any challenges that come their way in tomorrow’s battlespace.”

The base contract is for $113.1 million for 10 aircraft. The total contract value, including the base and contract options, is $677.2 million for the procurement of up to 64 aircraft. The contract also covers support equipment, spares and initial training. The aircraft deliveries are scheduled from calendar year 2024 to 2026.

The T-54A aircraft will replace the T-44 Pegasus aircraft and will feature a pressurized aircraft cockpit with side-by-side seating and a jump seat. The cockpit will be equipped with multifunction displays with a digital moving map; redundant ultra-high frequency and very high frequency radios; an integrated global positioning system/inertial navigation system; automatic dependent surveillance-broadcast; flight management system; weather radar, radar altimeter, and a cockpit data recorder. The METS aircraft will also have tricycle landing gear and a reconfigurable cargo bay in the cabin.

Additionally, the aircraft’s technology will capture data that allows for Conditioned-Based Maintenance Plus, a capability that enables the Navy to trend aircraft health over time to facilitate improved maintenance planning and efficiency.

This contract award will provide new aircraft to train Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard pilots to fly non-centerline thrust aircraft such as the V-22 Osprey, E-2D Hawkeye, C-130 Hercules and P-8 Poseidon. The T-44C sundown will begin six

months after METS’ first delivery.

PMA-273, at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, oversees the METS program. PMA-273 develops and oversees diverse and carrier-capable naval flight training systems where student pilots and undergraduate military flight officers acquire mission-critical aviation skills necessary to carry out current and future missions of the U.S Navy.