Navy Begins Competition for New Training Helicopter

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Navy has issued a request for proposals (RFP) for new training helicopters to replace its fleet of TH-57 Sea Ranger helicopters in the Navy's aviation training command.

The Naval Air Systems Command posted the RFP on Jan. 28 for the TH-XX program, designed to produce a new helicopter to succeed the TH-57B/C in rotary-wing training, including training in Instrument Flight Rules.

The Navy began using the TH-57A helicopter in 1981 to train rotary-wing pilots for the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and some foreign militaries. The helicopters were later upgraded to the TH-57B form primary training and TH-57C version for advanced and instrument training. Three helicopter training squadrons of Training Air Wing Five at Naval Air Station Whiting Field, Florida – HT-8, HT-18 and HT-28 – train student aviators in 41 TH-57Bs and 72 TH-57Cs.

The Navy expects to use the new helicopter and associated ground-based training systems to train at least 600 rotary-wing and tilt-rotor aviators per year, a number expected to increase through 2040. More than 50 percent of naval aviators are rotary-wing and tilt-rotor pilots.

The TH-XX helicopter will be one component of the Advanced Helicopter Training System, which also will include a Ground-Based Training System and contractor logistics and maintenance support.

The RFP announcement on the FedBizOps website states that the Navy expects the full and open competition to result in a single firm fixed-price contract for a total of 130 commercially derived aircraft through the base contract award

and up to four options.

Three helicopter manufacturers are expected to submit proposals. Bell is expected to propose its Model 407GXi – a twin engine helicopter – and its single-engine Model 429. Airbus is expected to offer its model H135, a twin-engine helicopter, while Agusta-Westland is expected to propose its single-engine TH-119.

The proposals are due to Naval Air Systems Command by April 2. The Navy expects to award a contract in the first quarter of fiscal 2020.