

# Navy Closing in on Training Copter Award



Leonardo's TH-119 is in the running for the Navy's new training helicopter. Leonardo-Finmeccanica

NATIONAL HARBOR,

Md. – The Navy is on track to award a contract for its new training helicopter by

the end of this calendar year, and Leonardo Helicopters believes it is in a

great position to win that competition, Andrew Gappy, director of the firm's

Navy and Marine Corps programs, said May 7.

Leonardo is

offering the TH-119, a modified version of its widely used commercial

helicopter, which is serving as a trainer for the Portuguese Air Force and

Israel, Gappy said. A former Marine helicopter pilot, Gappy said the 119 has

the advantage of being the only one of the three competitors that is made in America,

at Leonardo's full-service plant in Philadelphia. It also has a rugged, nearly

all metal airframe that can take the rough handling commonly endured by

training aircraft and has a single engine, which will reduce the long-term

maintenance and operating cost, he said.

Also competing to

replace the Navy's current TH-57, which is used to train helicopter pilots for

the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, are Airbus, with its

twin-engine

H-235P3, and Bell Helicopters, with the 407 GXi, an updated version of the Bell 206, which was the basis for the TH-57.

Gappy said all

three firms have submitted their proposals, which are being evaluated by the

Navy. The contract required an in-service helicopter, a ground training system

and a long-term sustainment proposal with projected cost. The winner will

produce 130 aircraft in five years, with the first five due by the end of the

fiscal 2020.

Gappy said the

TH-119 proposal was crafted with input from a team of former military

helicopter pilots. It is the highest power-rated single-engine helo in the

U.S., meets all of the Navy's requirement and offers a low sustainment cost.

"It's not just what the airplane can do; it's the affordability of the airplane," he said.