

Phillips outlines aviation modernization priorities

U.S. Army

WASHINGTON (Oct. 31, 2012) -- Lt. Gen. Bill Phillips praised the Army's industry and academic partners while outlining a handful of key aviation modernization priorities, Oct. 17, at an American Helicopter Society event in Arlington, Va.

Phillips, the principal military deputy, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition Logistics and Technology, or ASA(ALT), spoke to AHS about the purpose of Army acquisition and commitment of aviators currently sustaining a high op-tempo mission rate in Afghanistan.

Phillips also delineated a handful of key Science and Technology, or S&T, and acquisition efforts and successes fundamental to Army Aviation. They included the multi-year procurement programs for the CH-47 Chinook F and Black Hawk M helicopters, ongoing Armed Aerial Scout demonstrations and the Future Vertical Lift program aimed at engineering a fleet of next-generation aircraft.

"Army Aviation is one of the most deployed assets in the Army. Our op-tempo is very high and we are sustaining an 84-percent mission capable rate. We are now up to 5.5 million man hours and still flying in Afghanistan. Everyone at the highest levels of the Army recognizes the value of aviation to the fight," Phillips told an enthusiastic crowd of American Helicopter Society, or AHS, members.

Phillips made a point of praising the Army's industry partners involved in the Chinook and Black Hawk multi-year procurement programs, citing the cost savings to the Army and the increased stability they bring by helping to sustain the industrial base. In particular, the CH-47 F multi-year contract has achieved \$449 million in savings thus far and the UH-60 Black Hawk M multi-year has reached more than \$1.18 billion in cost avoidance.

"One thing that has really helped Army Aviation is having multi-year programs we can show our stakeholders. Today, [the Office of the Secretary of Defense] holds them up as a model for executing a multi-year strategy for a major platform. These allow our industry partners to have long-term strategies to help build much greater capability," Phillips said.

Phillips also praised the ongoing Future Vertical Lift/Joint-Multi-Role Technology Demonstration effort, an S&T program designed to engineer, build and deliver a next-generation helicopter with vastly improved avionics, electronics, range, speed, propulsion, survivability, operating density altitudes and payload capacity. The Future Vertical Lift, or FVL, program seeks to begin designing "demonstrator" aircraft by 2013 and conduct a first flight in 2017 as a series of first steps toward developing a next-generation fleet of helicopters by 2030.

"Part of the message is that the Army and [the Office of the Secretary of Defense]

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are committed to Future Vertical Lift," Phillips said, citing the Strategic Plan for Future Vertical Lift, which was recently signed by Ashton Carter, deputy secretary of Defense.

Phillips mentioned a DOD-wide push for greater energy efficiency within the context of the FVL discussion, specifying the importance of the Improved Turbine Engine Program, or ITEP, to engineer a next-generation, more fuel-efficient helicopter engine. The ITEP program, which will also contribute to the Apache and Black Hawk modernization efforts, will provide a reduced maintenance burden, reduced production and maintenance costs, more power and an increased high altitude capability.

Within this discussion of next-generation capabilities, Phillips also cited the recent success of the Apache Block III aircraft's Initial Operational Test & Evaluation, or IOT&E, wherein the aircraft performed a new level of Manned Unmanned Teaming, or MUM capability with Gray Eagle Unmanned Aerial System, or UAS, participating in the exercise. Level IV MUM, demonstrated last spring at the AH-64 Apache Block III IOT&E, Fort Irwin, Calif., allows Apache pilots to not only view video feeds from nearby UAS but also control the flight path and sensor payload.

"The Apache pilot can sit on the ground and call up video from a UAS that is flying over the target area. Before they ever take off, they can sit there and know exactly what the target looks like in real time. This saves them fuel and time and helps them get the intel they need before they start their mission," Phillips explained.

Phillips also cited importance of developing and fielding aircraft survivability technologies designed to protect helicopter crews from incoming enemy attacks. In particular, he mentioned efforts to field the Common Missile Warning System -- an advanced flare system able to divert approaching enemy fire and Advanced Threat Infrared Countermeasures, or ATIRCM - an infrared laser-"jammer" able to throw incoming missiles off course. Phillips also cited a now in-development next-generation, more lightweight ATIRCM-like capability called Common Infrared Countermeasures, or CIRCM.

Phillips said academic, industry and Army partners from TRADOC, G8 (programs) and G3 (operations) all work together to further important common goals.

"Army Aviation is doing remarkable work, thanks to the efforts of people who come together with various backgrounds to blend requirements, resources, acquisition and sustainment. If you look at what Aviation has done with its portfolio, they have been incredibly successful," he said.

In conclusion, Phillips paid tribute to the heroism and sacrifice of Chinook pilot Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bryan J. Nichols, 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, who lost his life earlier this year when his helicopter came under attack in Afghanistan.

Phillips cited a letter from Nichols'

10-year-old son Braydon, honoring and remembering his father's service.

"Braydon is proud of his dad. That is what we are all about -- and it is all of us

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together," Phillips explained.

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