



Thursday, November 09, 2006

CSAF's Vector: CSAR -X

To the Airmen of the United States Air Force

The Air Force has selected the CH/MH-47 built by The Boeing Company, Chicago, Illinois, as our newest Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) aircraft, culminating a competitive source selection process among three vendors. We'll call it the HH-47. We're confident our dedicated, professional CSAR Airmen and the HH-47 will carry on the rich Air Force CSAR heritage - stretching back to the Army Air Corps, through conflicts in Korea, Vietnam and most recently in Iraq and Afghanistan - toward a limitless horizon, where they continue to fly and fight "That Others May Live."

Our ability to return isolated personnel to safety is a moral and ethical imperative, so we've made procurement of this new CSAR aircraft one of our highest weapon system procurement priorities. American and coalition war fighters can rest assured we will come to get them, no matter where they are. Today's battlefields are non-linear and non-contiguous, changing shape and venue with speed that outpaces and out-reaches legacy aircraft. The Air Force must have a more capable next-generation CSAR aircraft to better support US and coalition personnel isolated from friendly forces by distance, threat, weather and enemy action. We are committed to leaving no one behind - a commitment that gives all members of the joint and coalition team the confidence to perform vital work in hostile and uncertain circumstances.

We plan to acquire 141 CSAR-X helicopters to replace our aging inventory of HH-60G PAVE HAWK helicopters, and we expect to achieve Initial Operational Capability by the end of 2012 with the most capable CSAR aircraft ever. Range and payload remain the soul of an air force, and the HH-47 exceeds our requirements in both areas. It will be capable of flying faster over longer ranges and higher altitudes, day or night, during adverse weather conditions, while carrying more personnel and specialized equipment than our legacy platform. Its increased payload capability provides a dramatic improvement in the number of injured personnel that can be rescued per sortie. Additionally, the HH-47 will be net-ready and outfitted with advanced avionics giving crews vastly better battlespace awareness than ever before. HH-47 crews will employ the best force protection capabilities ever offered, including a suite of integrated defensive systems and onboard weapons that give them greater firepower, lethality, and standoff range than legacy systems.

The USAF has a long history of excellence conducting Search and Rescue operations in times of conflict and in times of humanitarian need. In World War II, Army Air Forces (AAF) elements partnered with the British to demonstrate the first US aviation rescue capability. After the war, the AAF consolidated Search and Rescue operations and training under an organization that in 1964 became the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS). During the Vietnam era, ARRS CSAR Task Forces saved 4120 personnel, 2780 of those in combat. "Jolly Green Giant" rescue crews were highly regarded by their fellow aviators and highly rewarded for their heroism. They earned two Medals of Honor, 39 Air Force Crosses, and countless Silver Stars. Since 1979, the Air Force has awarded seven Mackay Trophies - given annually for the year's most meritorious flight - for rescue mission flights. Air Force CSAR Airmen have rescued over 470 members of the joint and coalition team in the Central Command AOR alone since 9/11. Finally, in the aftermath of the 2005 hurricanes, Air Force personnel rescued 4544 Americans from the flood-ravaged Gulf Coast.

Thanks to decades of successful Combat Search and Rescue missions, America's enemies understand our commitment to recovering isolated friendly forces. Unfortunately, our enemies have also repeatedly demonstrated they intend to exploit captured personnel to undermine American strategic objectives. Effective CSAR denies the enemy the ability to exploit our courageous war fighters by returning them to safety. While other services do personnel recovery, the Air Force is the only service with forces dedicated entirely to CSAR. Whether stranded by downed aircraft, surrounded by a hostile enemy, or abducted by terrorists, isolated personnel know they can rely on our Air Force CSAR professionals to do their job.

Every day our CSAR assets conduct operations across the spectrum of conflict. These dangerous missions are inherently high risk. But now, with the advent of the HH-47, those risks will be dramatically reduced. Our CSAR crews will have the increased combat radius, lift performance, and payload capability they need to operate effectively worldwide in the 21st century.

America's service men and women deserve the best. After careful consideration and a fair and open competition among multiple proposals, we've concluded that the Boeing CH/MH-47 is the best aircraft for the job. By purchasing 141 HH-47s, the Air Force will be able to provide the required force structure to sustain worldwide taskings for the nation's Combatant Commanders. We're pleased about the opportunity to partner once again with Boeing, and are convinced our Airmen - and all those in need around the world - are in good hands.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Michael Moseley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent horizontal line at the top.

T. MICHAEL MOSELEY
General, USAF
Chief of Staff