

**Opening Statement (As Prepared) Ranking Member Donald Norcross
Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee Hearing:
“Fiscal Year 2024 Rotary Wing Aviation Programs”
April 19, 2023**

I join in thanking our witnesses for appearing today.

Rotary wing aircraft have served for generations in diverse combat and logistics support purposes across each of the military branches. After many years of exceptionally capable and reliable rotary wing aircraft operations, each service has entered a different stage of modernization of its helicopter fleets. Successful modernization of capable and affordable rotary wing aircraft is an essential foundation for the Joint Force of the future.

To this end, the Army has selected an innovative tilt rotor aircraft as its Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) system and will transition from a rapid prototype effort to a formal program of record in Fiscal Year 2024. The subcommittee needs a better understanding of what risk reduction activities are in front of us as we move toward this milestone. Also, the Army’s Future Attack and Reconnaissance Aircraft (FARA) is in early development with prototype builds underway from two prime contractors. However, we understand that this effort is now delayed due to problems with development of the Improved Turbine Engine. I look forward to Secretary Bush providing an update on this effort.

I also have to say I’m disappointed that the Army’s FY24 request again does not fund procurement for the CH-47F Block II Chinook. I have concerns that continued delays with Chinook Block II production, compounded by the shutdown of the V-22 construction line, creates significant risk in this industrial base. We need to hear the Army’s way ahead on Chinook Block II production and stabilization efforts taken or that you plan to take to minimize this risk.

Turning to the Navy, the fleet’s workhorse, the MH-60 has completed procurement. The MH-60S will enter Service Life Extension Program in 2023, and the MH-60R will be right behind the S-model. We want to hear from our Navy witnesses how they will keep these aircraft relevant into the next decade. We also want to better understand the Navy’s interest and plans, if any, for Future Vertical Lift, and how it’s leveraging the Army’s work over the last few years and going forward.

For the Marine Corps, I’m pleased to see that recent Force Design 2030 analysis validates the need for the CH-53K heavy lift helicopter. Given this commitment to 53K, last year Congress authorized block-buy authority in the NDAA for the 2023 and 2024 procurement blocks. The expectation is that this authority will assist with controlling program cost. We look forward to hearing what impact this authority has had toward that objective, and also Secretary Stefany’s perspective on whether this program would be a good candidate for multi-year procurement authority in future years.

I am concerned, however, with recent Marine Corps AH-1Z “Cobra” Light Attack Helicopter squadron deactivations. I hope General Cederholm can address how the Marine Corps will meet

its global force presence commitments and, if necessary, provide sufficient combat power to Combatant Commanders during a period of conflict.

Finally, we are interested to know what each service is doing to increase aircraft survivability. How are you working together to leverage research and investment in survivability equipment especially for your common aircraft. Our helicopter pilots and aircrew deserve the best self-protection and safety systems available.

Thank you for your testimony.

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