

£183 million boost for military helicopter training

The MOD's UK Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS) has signed a £183 million contract to boost training services for new Rotary Wing pilots.

The contract amendment includes:

- An uplift of four new Airbus H145 helicopters
- A state-of-the-art simulator and infrastructure improvements
- Support in attracting and training personnel to meet the increased helicopter demand from the frontline

The new H145 helicopters and simulator will enable students to learn how to fly a range of missions, covering expected scenarios on operational deployment. In addition, the H145s enable students to practice winching tasks and rear crew activities.

Defence Minister James Heapey said:

This £183 million boost for our helicopter training will see our student pilots benefit from an ultra-modern simulator, new infrastructure at RAF Shawbury and four brand-new Airbus H145 helicopters. These crucial upgrades will help our students become the finest helicopter pilots in the world.

The Rotary Wing contract amendment was signed by UKMFTS – part of Defence, Equipment & Support (DE&S) – and Ascent Flight Training Management Ltd, which delivers pilot training for the UKMFTS in a partnering arrangement. It is part of a wider programme to increase training capacity for UK military pilots overall, as part of the £3.2 billion UKMFTS programme and helps address the increased demand for pilot training identified in the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review.

The four new H145 helicopters and simulator will be based at RAF Shawbury, Shropshire, which is where the Rotary Wing element of UKMFTS is delivered. The infrastructure improvements will cater for the increased student numbers.

Commodore Tom Manson, UKMFTS Head, Defence Equipment & Support, said:

I am delighted to uplift the capacity of our tri-service military helicopter pilot training services that we deliver in partnership with Ascent. The new twin-engine Airbus H145s will enhance the current mix of H135 and H145s that are used on UKMFTS, providing increased flexibility to deliver the range of training required for both pilots and aircrewmembers in advance of flying front line helicopters.

The H145 family (BK117, EC145 and H145) is a well-proven training aircraft with more than 1,300 helicopters in service around the world and has clocked more than 5.5 million flight hours.

The UKMFTS Programme is delivering a world-class, state-of-the-art training system which is a global exemplar for training aircrew in preparation for the operational front line.