Pilots test the Block 2 Upgrade software for the MH-60T helicopter on a cockpit trainer at the Coast Guard Aviation Training Center in Mobile, Alabama. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Acquisition Update: Coast Guard Takes Delivery Of Final Software Upgrade For MH-60T Helicopter

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The Coast Guard is preparing to install a software upgrade that marks the final phase of its MH-60T Jayhawk medium range recovery helicopter conversion program.

Called the Block 2 Upgrade, this software modification incorporates new global air traffic management requirements and corrects discrepancies created during the first phase of the avionics upgrade, which included modernization of the avionics system and installation of new sensors to achieve a common avionics architecture for all Coast Guard rotary wing aircraft.

The B2U will "improve the user interface, increase situational awareness and enhance operational safety," said Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Matsuoka, deputy program manager for the H-60 conversion. "It will also improve the navigation system to meet global advancements in aviation navigation."

Other benefits include the ability to make GPS approaches and follow more efficient flight routes.

The software revision was developed by the Coast Guard Aviation Training Center in Mobile, Alabama, with Rockwell Collins and the Army Aviation and Missile Research, Development and Engineering Center. The updated software was temporarily loaded on

both static cockpit trainers as well as in-service H-60s to support simulated and actual flight testing at the ATC.

"Using the cockpit trainers at the ATC allowed us to do rigorous testing on the software upgrade without taking one or more aircraft out of operation for extended periods of time," said Lt. Cmdr. Adam Young, B2U project lead at the ATC. "It also allowed us to start work on training standardization and documentation."

After formal qualification testing, final software delivery was Nov. 23.

 Conversion will start at ATC Mobile with the full motion simulator, then move to the aircraft stationed there. "The training center will be the first to implement the new software, so personnel can create the necessary training syllabus and documentation to conduct training for future air station conversions," Matsuoka said. Conversion of air stations should be underway by spring 2016.

 The final milestone in the program, transition to sustainment, will take place after the first several air stations are completed, Matsuoka said.

 In addition to the software upgrade, a program to extend the operational service life of the MH-60 Jayhawks through recapitalization of dynamic components and engine sustainment improvements is nearing completion. Work is being conducted during the programmed depot maintenance cycle and includes installation of the Aircraft Diagnostic Vibration Management System, which aids in the early detection of weakening components, and the Enhanced Digital Electronic Control Unit, which automatically provides additional power to the engines in emergency situations.