



The prototype MH-65E Dolphin takes to the air for the first time in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, Oct. 28. The MH-65E features modernized avionics systems, new sensors and an upgraded flight control system. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

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### **Acquisition Update: Coast Guard Tests Newest Version Of MH-65 Helicopter**

Oct. 29, 2015

The prototype MH-65E Dolphin – the next configuration in the Coast Guard’s short range recovery helicopter conversion program – completed its first flight in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, Oct. 28. Upgrades in this segment include modernization of the avionics systems, installation of new sensors and improvements to the automatic flight control system.

“This is a great day for the H-65 conversion program, transitioning us from a multi-year period of laboratory and ground testing into the flight test phase that will culminate with a recommendation for flight certification,” said Cmdr. Eric Drey, program manager. “It’s an important milestone for the men and women that have been working to develop the MH-65E.”

The most significant change is installation of the digital Common Avionics Architecture System cockpit architecture. CAAS provides four multi-function displays that allow the operator to select the most relevant information for the crew. Other changes include installation of expanded electro-optical/infrared sensors, a traffic collision avoidance system, and upgraded and integrated weather radar. The new weather radar provides information that can be used to detect weather patterns and warnings about serious weather.

Originally, this segment included replacement of the AFCS; however, the acquisition strategy was changed to upgrade the AFCS’ reliability, avoiding the risk and high cost of full replacement. Work to extend the aircraft’s service lives by upgrading and replacing

select components, incorporating diagnostic fault detection and improving field and depot maintenance tools and techniques will also be completed during this segment.

The \$300 million total upgrade provides enhanced capability and brings the Dolphin fleet into compliance with FAA next-generation requirements. The digital cockpit also will provide a common avionics architecture between all Coast Guard rotary-wing aircraft.

Because of the significant changes to the cockpit, pilots will need to complete a transition course at Aviation Training Center Mobile, Alabama, to qualify to fly the MH-65E. Two flight training simulators and three additional aircraft will be used to accommodate the enhanced training schedule.