

DEFENSE DAILY

FUTURE LONG-RANGE ASSAULT AIRCRAFT (FLRAA)

KNOWLEDGE GUIDE



Editor's Letter

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the FLRAA Knowledge Guide — a curated collection of articles dedicated to one of the most significant advancements in Army aviation in decades: the Future Long-Range Assault Aircraft program.

The MV-75 Cheyenne II represents a generational leap in vertical lift capability, a platform designed to meet the demands of modern multi-domain operations with greater speed, range, and survivability than its predecessors. As this program continues to advance, the volume of information surrounding it has grown considerably, spanning technical analyses, policy discussions, acquisition developments, and operational concepts. The purpose of this guide is to bring clarity to that body of knowledge.

This collection has been assembled for military professionals, defense analysts, acquisition officials, and the contractors and policymakers shaping FLRAA's future. Each article has been selected for its relevance and contribution to a well-rounded understanding of the program.

This guide represents a snapshot of the program as it stands today. CDR is on the horizon, and Defense Daily will continue covering every development as FLRAA moves toward that milestone and beyond. We hope it serves as a reliable reference, and we welcome your feedback as we refine and expand it.

Respectfully,

Matthew Beinart, Senior Army & Congressional Reporter



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Army Relooking At Its ‘Whole Aviation Transformation’ Plan, Acting Chief Tells Lawmakers

By MATTHEW BEINART

The Army is relooking at its “whole aviation transformation initiative,” the service’s acting chief of staff told lawmakers on Tuesday, to include its approach for future procurement of “enduring” platforms.

Gen. Christopher LaNeve’s confirmation of a planned review follows Defense Secretary Hegseth’s comments to Congressional appropriators last week that the Pentagon was open to “taking another look” at the Army’s plan to buy fewer legacy helicopters in the coming years.

“We are, as well, taking a look at the decisions that were all made on the side of angels, do they still hold as we go forward. We know we need the [MV-75] Cheyenne [Future Long Range Assault Aircraft]. We know that the [Chinook], the Black Hawk and the Apache are not legacy equipment, they’re enduring. They’re going to be in our fleet for many years. So we’re taking a hard look at this to make sure that we’ve [made] the right decisions on how we’re looking at that,” LaNeve said at a Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee (SAC-D) hearing.

LaNeve added the Army will provide an update to SAC-D on its plan for future manned aviation procurement after concluding its assessment.

Following Hegseth’s testimony last week, a bipartisan group of House lawmakers sent a letter [asking the Pentagon for a briefing](#) on the potential industrial base impacts as a result of the Army’s planned cuts to legacy aviation procurement (*Defense Daily*, May 15).

The Army’s fiscal year 2027 budget request outlined plans for sustained procurement cuts over the next five years for its Sikorsky [LMT]-built Black Hawks and Boeing [BA]-manufactured



Acting Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Christopher LaNeve testifies on a panel in front of the House Committee on Appropriations at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., April 16, 2026. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Aaron Troutman

Apache and Chinook helicopters (*Defense Daily*, April 23).

For Black Hawk, after receiving almost \$2 billion for procurement between FY ‘25 and ‘26 for dozens of aircraft, the service has requested just \$39.3 million in FY ‘27 for a single helicopter and plans to maintain that spending level from FY ‘28 to ‘31.

On Apache, the service has reduced funding for its program to remanufacture aircraft to the latest E-Model configuration down to \$1.5 million in FY ‘27, and for the upgraded CH-47F Block II Chinook, the Army has cut planned procurement by more than half compared to funding received the prior two years, seeking \$210.7 million for five aircraft.

Senior Army aviation officials have said the service is [assessing new contracting approaches](#) that may not be multi-year awards for its legacy aviation fleet but rather flexible deals to buy platforms as needed and to support continued international

demand, noting plans to continue modernizing and flying its Black Hawk, Apache and Chinooks fleets for decades to come (*Defense Daily*, April 23).

The Army is also currently pursuing an accelerated timeline for the **Bell** [TXT]-built MV-75 Cheyenne II Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) platform, with plans to equip a unit with the [first 24 aircraft in FY '30](#) (*Defense Daily*, April 15).

Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) said FLRAA represents one of the Army's most "critical modernization investments," while he asked the Army leaders how the service plans to balance the transition to the new platform as it continues to maintain a legacy fleet of Black Hawks.

"There's a fleet of more than 2,100 Black Hawks and projected FLRAA production rates [puts] a full replacement a decade away. That's not a criticism but it's the scale of what you're facing. And the Army has the opportunity and is balancing this circumstance with the need to modernize and sustain the Black Hawk fleet," Moran said.

LaNeve responded that he views "the Black

Hawk, the [Chinook and] the Apache as enduring aircraft that are going to be in our formations for a long time and we have to continue to make sure that we put our soldiers and our pilots in the best aircraft that are available. And we also have to have the ability to make a leap. So we're relooking at what those numbers actually are."

Army Secretary Dan Driscoll cited FLRAA as an example of the Army pursuing a "new project in the right way," adding he talks "at least every six weeks" with the CEOs of the companies involved in the program to ensure the accelerated timeline remains on track.

"We are spending quickly but very thoughtfully on behalf of the American taxpayer and our soldiers. This project is moving at lighting speed for a big lift. And it is incredibly important because it is open architecture, it can be flown autonomously, it can integrate new technologies that we don't even know about yet. So if you think of manned aviation into the future, almost certainly it will need autonomous unmanned solutions in and around it. And [the MV-75 Cheyenne II] is going to be able to do that," Driscoll said. ■

Army's Work With H-60Mx Black Hawk To Inform Bringing Autonomy To MV-75 FLRAA

By MATTHEW BEINART

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Army and **Sikorsky** [LMT] officials said Thursday the service's new Black Hawk outfitted to fly autonomously is serving as a testbed for bringing autonomy capability to the future MV-75 Cheyenne II Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA).

The update follows the Army's recent acceptance of the first H-60Mx, integrated with Sikorsky's MATRIX autonomy suite, which is now set to undergo extensive experimentation and testing to inform scaling of autonomy efforts.

"I won't speak to what technology they're going to shift from that standpoint, but they are using Black Hawk as a testbed to de-risk MV-75 and other platforms they want [bring autonomy] on because we've done all this work to this point," Rich Benton, vice president and general manager of Sikorsky, told *Defense Daily* in an interview at the Army Aviation Association of America's annual conference here.

Brig Gen. David Phillips, deputy program acquisition executive for maneuver air, later told reporters the ongoing experimentation with H-60Mx is "laying the foundation" for autonomy discussions with the MV-75.

"You've got a fly-by-wire [FLRAA] aircraft from day one. And then how we translate that [autonomy] knowledge into MV-75 will be accelerated because of these efforts," Phillips said.

The H-60Mx, the second Black Hawk outfitted with Sikorsky's MATRIX technology along with the company's own "Optimally Piloted Vehicle" (OPV) helicopter, were borne out of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency's (DARPA) Aircrew Labor In-Cockpit Automation System (ALIAS) with an aim to enable a helicopter to fly with or without a pilot at the controls.



The U.S. Army officially received a groundbreaking H-60Mx Black Hawk helicopter, extensively modified to fly with or without a pilot at the controls. (Photo courtesy Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company)

In February 2022, DARPA and Sikorsky conducted the [first ever completely unmanned, autonomous flight](#) with a Black Hawk as part of an ALIAS demonstration with no safety pilots onboard (*Defense Daily*, Feb. 9, 2022).

The Army in March announced it [officially accepted](#) the first H-60Mx after several years of DARPA and Sikorsky testing, with the service now planning for "advanced operational testing" with the aircraft (*Defense Daily*, March 20).

"They're going to use that aircraft to further develop those interfaces between the autonomy stack, flight controls and really determine the best sensor packages to go along with that. That's really the testbed for autonomy for other aircraft as well," Phillips said.

Sikorsky has noted that its MATRIX technology allows a Black Hawk to be operated from a tablet, and last fall a U.S. Army soldier for the first time [employed an autonomous helicopter](#) to conduct a series of logistics missions at an exercise (*Defense Daily*, Oct. 30, 2025).

Benton noted the forthcoming experimentation with the H-60Mx is likely to inform the Army's tactics, techniques and procedures for autonomous operations as well as providing insight into how such capabilities should be employed and how many Black Hawks it may want to retrofit or buy in an OPV-configuration.

"I think they're going to look and see how they can solve missions and where they want to employ it," Benton said. "It's not just going to be the Black Hawk. They want to look at...how do I put autonomy in other aircraft that's in their inventory and make them complementary."

The Army this week officially announced the **Bell** [TXT]-built MV-75 FLRAA tiltrotor aircraft has been [designated as the Cheyenne II](#), and senior leaders affirmed plan to equip a first unit with two dozen initial aircraft in fiscal year 2030 (*Defense Daily*, April 15).

Army Secretary Dan Driscoll told lawmakers on Thursday the service [wants "to over-invest](#) in FLRAA to get it online as quickly as possible," planning to spend more than \$2 billion in FY '27 to support the program's acceleration effort (*Defense Daily*, April 16).

During the competitive development phase to inform initial FLRAA requirements, Bell confirmed that in December 2019 it completed a successful [autonomous test flight](#) with its V-280 Valor platform (*Defense Daily*, Jan. 9 2020).

Benton noted that, while he does not necessarily see "a world where all Black Hawks are flying autonomously," he anticipates increasing interest in scaling the technology, noting there are conversations between DARPA and other undisclosed customers on potentially providing OPV aircraft.

"When you look at the rest of the world, I absolutely believe within the next 10 years you will see missions that are being traditionally done with some of our platforms being offloaded into an autonomous platform. The economics are there. The technology is getting there. And it's really filling some of those gaps that we continue to fill every year," Benton said. "I think the threat will help accelerate the capability, because we're actually going to get a safer outcome by adopting autonomy than putting lives in harm's way. And when you look at it that way, to me, the evolution is inevitable." ■

Army Secretary Says “We Need To Over-Invest in FLRAA To Get It Online As Quickly As Possible”

By FRANK WOLFE

Rep. Ken Calvert (R-Calif.), chairman of the House Appropriations Committee’s defense panel (HAC-D), said on Thursday that the Army’s budget plan beginning in fiscal 2027 has more than \$2 billion to accelerate development and fielding of the future MV-75 Cheyenne II Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) by **Bell** [TXT].

“The FLRAA investment is necessary because, if you look at the Indo-Pacific, the distances we have to go and the speed with which we have to move, our current platforms are just not sufficient in and of themselves,” Army Secretary Dan Driscoll testified at a HAC-D Army posture hearing on April 16 in response to a question from Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Ct.), HAC’s ranking member. “So, as part of the portfolio of solutions, we need to over-invest in FLRAA to get it online as quickly as possible and then have it as part of a constellation of options for different theaters.”

DeLauro, whose district includes the headquarters of **Lockheed Martin’s** [LMT] Sikorsky, the builder of the Army’s UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and variants, said that she is concerned that, according to documents she said her office has received, Army budgeted funding for service aviation in fiscal 2027 “drops from \$4.1 billion to \$1.9 billion, including reductions to the Chinooks, the Apaches--where there’s no longer a line, and Blackhawks, while MV-75 FLRAA funding increases significantly.”

Boeing [BA] builds CH-47 Chinooks and AH-64 Apache attack helicopters.

Cutting Chinook, Apache, and Blackhawk funding “so sharply weakens that industrial base, including the workforce and suppliers that support Army aviation,” DeLauro said. “Reductions to the Chi-



Pictured is a Bell rendition of the future MV-75 Cheyenne II Future Long Range Assault Aircraft.

nook program affect approximately 30,000 jobs across 320 suppliers in 39 states with an estimated \$848 million economic impact.”

“The decision to fund only one Blackhawk in 2027 may affect 240 suppliers across 41 states,” she said. “Sikorsky programs support 55,000 jobs nationwide. At the same time, the cuts are occurring before the FLRAA has reached a flyable prototype.”

“For me, it raises a concern about the potential gap in capability for both the active Army and the Reserve components,” DeLauro said.

The Army said this week that it plans to equip a first unit with 24 MV-75s in [fiscal year 2030](#) (*Defense Daily*, Apr. 15).

The debate at HAC-D’s Thursday hearing over FLRAA and existing helicopters did not touch on whether helicopters are useful and survivable in future conflicts with significant numbers of one-way attack drones. ■

Army Names FLRAA As Cheyenne II; Plans First Unit With 24 Aircraft In FY '30 While Noting Timeline 'Variables'

By MATTHEW BEINART

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Army announced Wednesday it has officially designated its MV-75 Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) as the Cheyenne II, with senior leaders affirming a plan to equip a first unit with two dozen initial aircraft in fiscal year 2030.

Army officials ahead of the naming announcement at the Army Aviation Association of America's annual conference here declined to offer further dates for specific milestones on the accelerated program timeline, citing supply chain variables and the need for stable funding.

"I don't want to commit to dates just because I don't own all the variables there. Like I said, it is a very success-oriented schedule. If everything goes well, we'll probably see it flying inside of the next two years. But if we run into some challenges, that's going to push things off to the right," Maj. Gen. Clair Gill, portfolio acquisition executive (PAE) for maneuver air, told reporters last week. "We've taken as much slack out of the system as we possibly could, but that doesn't allow for anything to go wrong either."

Bell's [TXT] V-280 Valor tiltrotor aircraft was named the winner of the FLRAA competition in December 2022, which aimed to find a platform that could eventually replace a sizable portion of the Black Hawk fleet. The Army awarded the company an initial deal worth up to \$1.3 billion that could total \$7 billion if all options are picked up.

The Army in August 2024 [approved the Milestone B decision](#) to move the FLRAA program into the Engineering and Manufacturing Development phase, to include picking up the next contract option that will cover the build of six prototype aircraft (*Defense Daily*, Aug. 2 2024).



"This is a generational leap in capability for the Army. [It's] an aircraft that flies twice as far, twice as fast as our current fleet. [It] truly fundamentally changes how commanders think about distance, time and maneuver on the battlefield. It combines the vertical lift of a helicopter with the speed and range of an airplane, allowing us to project combat power from safer distances, penetrate deeper into contested environments and deliver soldiers where they are needed most, faster than we ever have before," Brent Ingraham, the Army's top acquisition official, told reporters.

Gill notes the MV-75 Cheyenne II is the first entirely new aircraft introduced into the Army's inventory since the 1980s, describing it as "complex [a program] as we could have."

"We feel good about it. But I don't want to be overly optimistic and commit to something that, two years from now, I would potentially look back and say there were so many factors in there that I didn't control and we didn't understand till we got to that point," Gill said.

The Army over the last year has detailed a push for an accelerated timeline for the newly-named MV-75 Cheyenne II, previously noting an aim to make an [early production decision](#) in fiscal year 2028, a year earlier than originally scheduled, and outlining plans to begin delivering the first aircraft to the 101st Airborne Division by late 2028 or early 2029 (*Defense Daily*, Oct. 13, 2025).

Gill noted the future MV-75 Cheyenne II remains on a “very aggressive schedule,” while declining to provide further specifics on when the Army expects to achieve program goals in the lead up to the first unit equipped milestone in FY ‘30.

“What I would caution is, because this is such a complex system and the first of its kind, in terms of how we’re developing it, there’s a lot that we have to learn along the way. And so I would say we have some very optimistic goals about when we’re going to deliver a first aircraft and when we’re going to deliver a first formation. And so, we’re pretty excited about what Bell is doing and Textron, but we also acknowledge that we have a lot of complexity that we’ve got to consider. And so, we’re going to take it day by day, week by week and month by month, as we work through their integrated master schedule that they have developed with us,” Gill said.

“A battalion of 24 [aircraft] is what we’re shooting for. How we get there...includes a lot of variables,” Gill added. “If I owned every one of those variables, I would tell you exactly what date it’s going to come off the production line, what date it’s going to break friction with the ground, what date that it’s going to start its flight test envelope expansion. The problem is I don’t own every single one of those variables until we know that the parts suppliers are delivered and that the engineers have done enough modeling in the simulator. So that’s why I’m not willing to commit to tell you exactly when something’s going to happen.”

When asked about the dates discussed over the last year in regards to the accelerated program timeline, Deputy PAE Maneuver Air Brig. Gen. David Phillips told reporters those “are still valid.”

“Without committing to a scheduled date, the work to get to a baseline schedule is 100 percent what the teams have been working toward over the past two years,” Phillips said.

Phillips said much of the acceleration effort to date has focused on ensuring the supply chain for MV-75 Cheyenne II was ready to “to really keep up with the plan to get to that first unit equipped,” noting there are around 200-300 tier one and two suppliers and another 2,000 tier three and four suppliers contributing to the program.

“What we’re looking at is the realities of the supply chain and the suppliers and making sure we can line up each of those components for those suppliers in the supply chain to arrive on time, on time for testing, on time for qualification and really then assembling all that in the next year, so we’ll have an aircraft ready to test,” Phillips said.

Bell told *Defense Daily* last May it was [“confident” it can meet](#) the Army’s accelerated timeline for FLRAA (*Defense Daily*, May 19 2025).

Rolls-Royce is [currently testing](#) the new AE 1107 engines set to power the MV-75 Cheyenne II, and Scott Ames, the company’s senior vice president for the MV-75 program, has also expressed confidence in supporting the more rapid schedule (*Defense Daily*, Dec. 16, 2025).

“We support the Army’s plan to accelerate the MV-75 FLRAA program. We are confident in the steps we’ve taken to meet a faster timeline, including the use of digital engineering and virtual prototyping, as well as close collaboration with Bell and the Army throughout the process. We are currently conducting engine integration testing that gives us greater confidence every day that we will be able to deliver,” Ames said. “That being said, we will continue testing in 2026 and are on track to deliver the first set of engines prior to Bell’s delivery of the MV-75 FLRAA prototype to the U.S. Army.”

Awaiting Budget Details

Budget documents released to date outlining the Pentagon’s FY ‘27 spending request do not

appear to provide much insight into the Army's MV-75 Cheyenne II plans, while the department and the service is set to roll out a more detailed budget next week.

"As the full budget rolls out, you'll see where we're focused on not only introducing this new aircraft but ensuring that we maintain and keep the operational fleet we've got today," Ingraham said, while declining to provide specifics on MV-75 budget numbers at the moment.

"This name reflects more than heritage. It reflects identity. The Cheyenne people inhabited the Great Plains for 400 years, adopting to a harsh and unforgiving environment as highly proficient hunters and gatherers," Ingraham said of the new designation. "Today, the Cheyenne are represented by the Northern Cheyenne tribe in Montana [and] in the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes in Oklahoma, whose legacy reflects the proud and

enduring warrior tradition, ground and protection, provision and leadership. Those values demand capability, and in today's fight, that capability comes in the form of speed, range, lethality and adaptability, that spirit of mobility, resilience and discipline, strength is what the name Cheyenne II represents."

The Army previously used the Cheyenne name in the late 1960s for the Lockheed-developed and subsequently cancelled AH-56 high-speed attack helicopter, which Gill noted represented a similar "transformational leap ahead technology" approach to the FLRAA effort.

"While the AH-56 program did not move forward, its legacy of innovation and speed lives on in the new tiltrotor platform," the Army said in a statement on Wednesday. ■

Cal Biesecker contributed to this story

Bell Taps RTX's Collins Aerospace To Provide Key Systems For MV-75 FLRAA

By MATTHEW BEINART

RTX's [RTX] Collins Aerospace announced Monday it has secured multiple contracts from Bell [TXT] to provide five key systems for the Army's new MV-75 Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA).

Collins said it has been selected to provide the main power generation capability and the inter-connect drive system for FLRAA as well as its SmartProbe air data system, the cockpit seats and the tiltrotor platform's ice protection system.

"The Army's new generation of rotorcraft needs to fly farther and faster, and we're committed to helping Bell accelerate delivery of that advanced performance with Collins' military-grade commercial technology," Troy Brunk, president of Collins Aerospace, said in a statement. "We have ready-now manufacturing and service capabilities around the globe to ensure the Army can urgently deliver, modernize and sustain the MV-75 FLRAA for the next 50 years."

Bell's V-280 Valor tiltrotor aircraft was named the winner of the FLRAA competition in December 2022, which aimed to find a platform that could eventually replace a sizeable portion of the Black Hawk fleet. The Army awarded the company a deal worth up to \$1.3 billion that could total \$7 billion if all options are picked up.

The Army has detailed a push for an accelerated FLRAA timeline, aiming to make an early production decision in fiscal year 2028, a year earlier than originally scheduled, and outlining plans to deliver the first aircraft to the 101st Airborne Division by late 2028 or early 2029.

"We are happy to work with Collins Aerospace and add their expertise to Team FLRAA," Ryan Ehinger, Bell's senior vice president and FLRAA



The V-280 Valor. Bell photo.

program director, said in a statement. "Together, we are committed to delivering a high-performing, reliable aircraft that will provide the U.S. Army with the critical capability it needs for the future fight."

A total value for Bell's five awards to Collins Aerospace for the FLRAA work has not yet been disclosed, while Collins said it will provide "several of these systems via commercial acquisition authorities."

Bell's additional partners on the MV-75 FLRAA include Rolls-Royce providing its AE 1107F engines, GE Aerospace [GE] delivering the avionics and "digital backbone" for the aircraft and Honeywell [HON] [contributing](#) the auxiliary power unit and cooling solution (*Defense Daily*, June 16, 2025).

The FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act [backed](#) the Army's FLRAA acceleration push, while directing the service to provide an implementation plan and timeline, to include details on the status of industrial base to support early production and the estimated long-term cost savings (*Defense Daily*, June 16, 2025). ■

Rolls-Royce Testing Engine for MV-75 in Indianapolis

By FRANK WOLFE

Rolls-Royce's testing of the AE 1107F engine for the U.S. Army MV-75 Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) has begun in Indianapolis, the company said on Tuesday.

The MV-75 by **Textron, Inc.**'s [TXT] Bell is to carry two AE 1107Fs.

Rolls-Royce said that the "advanced manufacturing facility" in Indianapolis is the company's largest in the U.S. and that Rolls-Royce "has invested more than \$1 billion in technology enhancements, facility upgrades and test capabilities over the past decade to support U.S. Department of Defense programs like the MV-75 FLRAA."

The Army wants to make an [early production decision](#) on the MV-75 in fiscal year 2028--a year earlier than originally planned (*Defense Daily*, Dec. 11).

The AE 1107F is the newest in the AE line of engines, which have "more than 90 million flight hours across 16 commercial and military platforms," Rolls-Royce said on Tuesday. "AE engines share a common core, with 80 percent commonality across the engine family."



Pictured is a Bell photo of the company's V-280 Valor, the basis for the Army's future MV-75 Future Long As.

The AE series includes the AE 1107C on the U.S. Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force V-22 tiltrotor by a Bell-**Boeing** [BA] team, and the marinized MT7 engine for the Navy's Ship-to-Shore Connector landing craft by Textron.

Unlike the V-22, which features tilting engine nacelles, the MV-22 is to have fixed engines and tilting proprotors. ■

Final FY '26 NDAA Backs Army's Early Production Push For FLRAA

By MATTHEW BEINART

Lawmakers are backing the Army's push to accelerate the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) program, including a provision in the next defense policy bill that would authorize moving into early low-rate production.

The Army has said it is aiming to make an early production decision on the Bell [TXT]-built MV-75 FLRAA in fiscal year 2028, which would be a year earlier than originally planned.

"The Secretary of the Army may enter into contracts, in advance of full-rate production, for the procurement of FLRAA as part of an accelerated low-rate early production effort for such aircraft," the final version of the FY '26 National Defense Authorization Act states.

The authorization for early FLRAA production was included in the House's original bill, but not the Senate's version, while lawmakers noted the provision in the final legislation has been amended to "ensure the program completes a rigorous developmental test flight campaign prior to delivering the platform to the operational forces or entering into full rate production."

The House on Wednesday the \$900.6 billion conferenced NDAA, with the Senate expected to take up the defense policy bill next week (*Defense Daily*, Dec. 10).

Bell's V-280 Valor tiltrotor aircraft was named the winner of the FLRAA competition in December 2022, which aimed to find a platform that could eventually replace a sizeable portion of the Black Hawk fleet, awarding the company a deal worth up to \$1.3 billion that could total \$7 billion if all options are picked up.

Army leaders in May first detailed an intent to speed up fielding of the MV-75 FLRAA by two



years, with an aim to now deliver the first aircraft to the 101st Airborne Division by late 2028 or early 2029 (*Defense Daily*, May 14).

Col. Jeffrey Poquette, project manager for FLRAA, said in October Army budget officials have also affirmed the ability to move "billions of dollars to the left" in funding plans in order to support the program acceleration, with the service now expecting to receive the first prototyping in early '27 to help inform the [early production decision in FY '28](#) (*Defense Daily*, Oct. 13).

To achieve the acceleration, Poquette has said the Army will look to move into production before completely finishing developmental testing on the initial FLRAA prototypes.

The final NDAA states that the FLRAA acceleration effort is expected to "maintain momentum and learning continuity between test article completion and full production ramp-up" and "to mitigate cost escalation risks and improve program affordability across the life cycle."

"In executing the early procurement authority, the Army Secretary shall prioritize program continuity, cost-efficiency and workforce retention across

the supply chain for tiltrotor aircraft, ensure that aircraft procured as part of the early production effort incorporate lessons learned from test article evaluations, maintain flexibility in design to accommodate future upgrades through the modular open systems architecture and digital backbone, ensure that the program completes a rigorous developmental test flight campaign prior to delivering the platform to the operational forces [and] ensure the program completes a rigorous opera-

tional test and evaluation prior to entering into full rate production,” the NDAA states.

The NDAA also directs the Army secretary to brief Congress within 180 days of the bill’s passage on the implementation plan and timeline for the FLRAA acceleration effort, the status of industrial base to support early production and the estimated long-term cost savings. ■

Army Details Plan To Speed Up FLRAA Prototype Delivery To Early FY '27, Production Decision In FY '28

By MATTHEW BEINART

A lead official on Monday detailed the Army's plan to speed up the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) timeline as the service now looks to receive the first Bell [TXT]-built prototype in early fiscal year 2027 and plans for an early production decision in FY '28.

Col. Jeffrey Poquette, project manager for FLRAA, said Army budget officials have also affirmed the ability to move "billions of dollars to the left" in funding plans in order to support the program acceleration.

"What we've said is can we make an early production decision at the right risk levels with the right authorities earlier than Milestone C. So we pulled that early production decision to the left. The Army's still got time to make it. It is a decision. It is not a foregone conclusion," Poquette said during a Defense News panel at the Association of the U.S. Army conference in Washington, D.C.

Bell's V-280 Valor tiltrotor aircraft was named the winner of the FLRAA competition in December 2022, which aimed to find a platform that could eventually replace a sizeable portion of the Black Hawk fleet, awarding the company a deal worth up to \$1.3 billion that could total \$7 billion if all options are picked up.

Army leaders in May first detailed an intent to [speed up fielding](#) of the MV-75 FLRAA by two years, with an aim to now deliver the first aircraft to the 101st Airborne Division by late 2028 or early 2029 (*Defense Daily*, May 14).

Poquette on Monday noted the Army was expecting to have the first prototype from Bell in mid-2027, before Army Secretary Dan Driscoll directed



that be achieved in 2026, with the new date now set for early FY '27.

Additionally, the early production decision is also expected to occur a year earlier than originally planned, with the Army looking to consolidate the concurrent testing and production timelines.

Bell told *Defense Daily* in May it was "[confident](#)" it can meet the Army's accelerated timeline for FLRAA (*Defense Daily*, May 19).

To achieve the acceleration, Poquette said the Army will look to move into production before completely finishing developmental testing on the initial FLRAA prototypes.

"We don't see it as risky as in the past. Some programs have done development tests and operational tests at the same time. We're not doing that. [This is] developmental tests, production alongside [that] and then operational test when the right risk authority is comfortable putting that airframe in the air with operators," Poquette said.

The early production decision will be informed by data gathered in testing to date, a successful crit-

ical design review and ensuring the first prototype flies properly, Poquette added.

“If all that happens then the Army acquisition executive can make an early production decision and say, ‘I’m willing to accept the risk that they won’t be perfect but they will be valuable to the operator,” Poquette said.

The House’s version of the next National Defense Authorization Act includes a provision [supporting the use](#) of early production contracts for FLRAA (*Defense Daily*, July 24).

On the budget aspect for the FLRAA acceleration, Poquette noted the Army doesn’t plan to spend more money but rather will look to allocate those funds earlier than previously projected.

“It was a hard thing for [the Army G-8] to do. Make no mistake, it’s a lot of money. It’s bringing billions of dollars to the left. Again, we’re spending [that] earlier. It’s not more [money],” Poquette said.

The timeline would allow for a company’s worth of aircraft to be delivered 18 months earlier, a battalion of 24 aircraft 18 months earlier as well, and a brigade of aircraft 30 months earlier, according to Poquette.

“So not only are we making an early production decision but we’re ramping up our production [plans],” Poquette said.

In working with Bell, Poquette said the Army’s priorities for “right to repair” language and building on a modular open systems architecture were “non-negotiable” when looking at how to speed up the timeline. ■

Bell ‘Confident’ In Meeting Army’s FLRAA Acceleration, First Prototype Delivery In 2027

By MATTHEW BEINART

Bell [TXT] is “confident” it can meet the Army’s plan for a multi-year acceleration of the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) program, a lead company official told *Defense Daily*, as it works toward delivering the first prototype in 2027.

“The intent on our side, and I think on the Army side as well, is to get the capability out to the war-fighter as soon as possible,” Ryan Ehinger, Bell’s FLRAA program director, said in an interview last week. “We’re highly supportive and believe it is an executable plan.”

Army Secretary Dan Driscoll and Gen. Randy George, the service’s chief of staff, told lawmakers recently the Army wants to accelerate the FLRAA program and speed up the timeline for fielding the aircraft, which had been planned for 2030 (*Defense Daily*, May 7).

Gen. James Mingus, the Army vice chief of staff, announced last week at the Army Aviation Association of America’s annual conference in Nashville that the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell in Kentucky will be the first division to receive the new aircraft, and Maj. Gen. Clair Gill, the Army aviation branch chief, then confirmed the Army aims to begin that fielding by late 2028 or early 2029 (*Defense Daily*, May 14).

Ehinger told *Defense Daily* discussions have been “ongoing” with the Army on the acceleration efforts for FLRAA, which has been officially designated as the MV-75, adding the timeline Bell is working toward would align with officials’ comments about moving the fielding plan to the left.

“I think this is more an acceleration of the production aspects of the [program]. Our priority will remain on getting the prototype aircraft out there and into test and executing a safe test program,



The V-280 Valor. Bell photo.

in parallel though having the confidence to start working those production aircraft,” Ehinger said in an interview at the conference.

Gill, in a briefing last week, reiterated the Army is “100 percent committed to FLRAA” and accelerating the program, noting service officials met recently with Bell to discuss “shared risk” on speeding up the timeline.

“Our leadership has gone to Congress and said that’s what we want to do. They’re going to go find additional money to figure out how to accelerate that program,” Gill told reporters. “Like all things, we don’t want to own all of [the risk] nor do we expect them to own all of it. So we’ll come to some agreements through these negotiations on the appropriate shared risk for the development program.”

Bell’s V-280 Valor tiltrotor aircraft was named the winner of the FLRAA competition in December 2022, beating out a Sikorsky [LMT] and Boeing [BA] team’s Defiant X coaxial rigid rotor helicopter offering for the program to find a platform that will eventually replace a sizeable portion of the Black Hawk fleet (*Defense Daily*, Dec. 5, 2022).

The Army's initial FLRAA deal to Bell is worth up to \$1.3 billion but could total \$7 billion if all options are picked up.

Last August, the Army approved the Milestone B decision to move FLRAA into the Engineering and Manufacturing Development phase, to include picking up the next contract option that will cover the build of six prototype aircraft (*Defense Daily*, Aug. 2 2024).

Ehinger noted Bell's next major milestone for FLRAA is completing the Critical Design Review by late this year or nearly next year.

"Our focus right now is really on...that completion of the Critical Design Review, getting through all of that technical maturity, moving toward that initial prototype aircraft and getting into that flight test program," Ehinger said. "The focus right now is making sure we've got the design right. [That provides] a level of confidence that when we do deliver that first prototype aircraft, it is going to do well in test and we won't get the significant discoveries that you might see in flight testing programs of the past because we've got validated analytical models, because [both Bell and the Army] are both working in the design space and looking over things as we go, because everything's 3D modeled and we're doing maintenance and sustainment run throughs with augmented reality and other things to get ahead of those hardware discoveries."

Delivery of the first prototype is planned for 2027, according to Ehinger, while he declined to offer a

specific date for when an initial flight could occur.

Bell has begun manufacturing components for the prototypes, with Ehinger citing the company's use of automated fiber placement and "higher tech" processes that "improve repeatability and quality" in the process as helping to enable some of the production acceleration.

"We started manufacturing a while ago. We're starting to see some really strong proof points right now that some of the simplification that we've done in our manufacturing processes and some of the different ways that we're designing for manufacturing is yielding very positively," Ehinger said. "We pride ourselves on being very vertically integrated in a lot of the traditionally more complex, dynamic components. And so, Bell is doing not just final assembly [of the aircraft] but we're doing the gearboxes, we're doing the rotor blade systems, we're doing the wing structure and the fuselage as well. A lot of that is in work now to support those early prototypes."

Ehinger also pointed to Bell's model-based systems engineering work and prior risk reduction efforts with the Joint Multi-Role Technology Demonstrator program as having set "a strong foundation technically" to support acceleration efforts.

"The real-time collaboration in the same digital environment with the customer, I think [that] provides a high level of confidence to be able to move forward into some of these things in production," Ehinger said. ■

Army's 101st Airborne Division Will Be First To Get FLRAA, Potentially By Late '28

By MATTHEW BEINART

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Army's 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell in Kentucky will be the first division to receive the new Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) and those deliveries could potentially begin in late 2028 or early 2029, senior leaders said Wednesday.

Gen. James Mingus, the Army vice chief of staff, first confirmed the initial fielding plans to the 101st in remarks at the Army Aviation Association of America's annual conference here, and said the decision was "based on their mission profile and theater demands."

"And as an 82nd [Airborne Division] guy myself, you know I wasn't in the room when that decision was being made," Mingus said. "But seriously, this decision makes sense, the 101st is a formation built to deploy rapidly and operate in austere conditions."

"The 101st flies into real world contested environments, across wide terrain, often without the



U.S. Army Experimental Test Pilot Maj. Wesley Paulsen and Bell Aircraft pilot Mr. Paul Ryan approach the Bell V-280 Valor at the Bell Flight Research Center in Arlington, Texas, in preparation for flights of the aircraft that has since been selected for the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft program. (Photo Credit: JAY MILLER)

luxury of fixed support infrastructure. They need speed, endurance and flexibility," Mingus added.

Bell's [TXT] V-280 Valor tiltrotor aircraft was named the winner of the FLRAA competition in December 2022, beating out a Sikorsky [LMT] and Boeing [BA] team's Defiant X coaxial rigid rotor helicopter offering for the program to find a platform that will eventually replace a sizeable portion of the Black Hawk fleet (*Defense Daily*, Dec. 5, 2022).

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"FLRAA is not a replacement in the conventional sense. It's a leap ahead technology and capability. It's the first full expression of what vertical lift should be in the next era of warfare."

— Gen. James Mingus

ity. It's the first full expression of what vertical lift should be in the next era of warfare," Mingus said. "It delivers operational reach that alters how we close with the enemy. It brings the right combination of speed, payload, and survivability we've never had in one aircraft."

Army Secretary Dan Driscoll and Gen. Randy George, the service's chief of staff, told lawmakers last week the Army wants to accelerate the FLRAA program and speed up its timeline by two years (*Defense Daily*, May 7).

Maj. Gen. Clair Gill, the Army aviation branch chief, said the service is "in the throes" of working with Bell on how to accomplish the acceleration,

noting the Army expects the first FLRAA prototype to likely fly in 2027 and could look to begin fielding to the 101st by late 2028 or early 2029.

"Part of the Army Transformation Initiative is the Army said, hey, we're all in on FLRAA. We're going to work with the Bell Textron team to accelerate this. So we are in the throes of the negotiation right now to figure out how we're going to field the first Engineering Manufacturing and Design [phase] aircraft and then, on the heels of that, continue right into low-rate production so we get some aircraft out in the hands of aviation warfighters in the 101st to get this thing off and running," Gill said. ■

Thank you for reading!

The MV-75 Cheyenne II program is moving fast. CDR is on the horizon, subcontract positions are being locked in, and the decisions being made right now will define Army aviation for a generation. *Defense Daily* will be there for every milestone, covering FLRAA and every defense program that matters with independent, authoritative reporting that tracks programs from policy and budgets through funding, contracts, and real-world performance, delivered every business day.

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