AIRBUS HELICOPTERS INTRODUCES 'HFORCE' WEAPONS PACKAGE

News / Manufacturer



Airbus Helicopters has introduced “HForce,” a new “generic” weapon system for the H125M light single, H145Mlight twin and H225M medium twin helicopters. The newly structured offer, focused on the manufacturer’s military commercial rotorcraft, follows an “incremental” approach to arming them. It includes a variety of ballistic and guided weapons, along with associated targeting systems.

“We can do air-to-air, air-to-surface and air-to-ground,” Philippe Kohn, sales promotion manager, said during a press briefing at Airbus Helicopters’ Marignane, France, headquarters in late February.

In the “option zero” level of equipment, the helicopter is just “mission ready.” This means the airframe is reinforced where needed to accommodate guns and pods, while the electric harness includes accompanying provisions. “Option zero is deterrent, as your neighbors will know you can easily turn your basic aircraft into light attack helicopters,” Kohn said.

Option 1 adds ballistic firing with a helmet-mounted sight and display (HMSD)—Thales’s Scorpion monocular lens—for the pilot. In option 2, the gunner gets a HMSD too, and an electro-optical system (EOS) based on a Wescam forward-looking infrared turret. The gunner can fire with the EOS, or the pilot can fire with his HSMD. In option 3, guided weapons are available. The system is designed to work with a gun turret, which could become option 4, Kohn added.

For guided weapons, Airbus has selected FZ laser-guided rockets. The manufacturer also offers the possibility to integrate air-to-ground missiles on request. Air-to-air missiles are described as a

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growth potential. As for ballistic weapons, a 20mm cannon, a 12.7mm machine gun and 70mm rockets are available.

A customer may want to choose other weapons than those Airbus has selected. “If a customer wants another gun, we can integrate it, but our basic offer is the best compromise in operational, cost and time-to-market terms,” Kohn warned.

Although a lower-cost option than a Tiger attack helicopter, a military commercial helicopter equipped withHForce has the same crew resource management approach. “The pilot flies, the gunner fights,” Kohn said. The first fire of a testbed H225M is scheduled for May, leading to qualification next year.

“We have eight customers deeply interested and will hopefully sign a contract this year,” Kohn said. Other commercial helicopters in the Airbus product range may eventually become part of the HForce offer.

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