FRANCE CONSIDERS ACCELERATING LIGHT HELICOPTER ACQUISITION

News / Manufacturer



France will decide next year whether to advance the timeline for a wide-ranging procurement that seeks to replace hundreds of light and medium helicopters operated by all three branches of its armed forces.

Under the nascent hélicoptère interarmées léger (HIL) programme, Paris intends to begin the acquisition process in 2020.

However, with a number of aged types rapidly reaching the end of their operational lives – notably its navy's 22 Aérospatiale Alouette IIIs – the DGA procurement agency is studying whether it needs to accelerate the replacement effort.

The DGA says: "The timeline is still under study and will depend on choices that remain to be made. Possible solutions are being assessed; the feasibility to accelerate the program will be studied by 2017."

Asset Image

Image source or aircraft type unknown

© 2015-2026 50SKYSHADES.COM — Reproduction, copying, or redistribution for commercial purposes is prohibited.

SIPA/REX/Shutterstock

But HIL seems a daunting undertaking. France is seeking to replace a broad range of helicopters across different weight classes running up to around 7t, and performing a variety of missions. These include the air force's Airbus Helicopters AS555 Fennec light attack rotorcraft and SA330 Pumas; the Puma transports and SA341/342 Gazelles used in the reconnaissance and light attack role by the army, plus its Fennec trainers; and the navy's multirole AS365 Dauphin and AS565 Panthers, as well as the Alouette IIIs.

If Paris replaces its inventory on a like-for-like basis, some 422 new helicopters could be required, based on data in Flightglobal's Fleets Analyzer database. However its eventual acquisition is likely to be well below this figure.

Key to its deliberations will be whether it attempts to acquire single or multiple platforms for the wide-ranging requirement. "Several options are being studied – a single or several platforms to match the whole spectrum of missions," says the DGA.

© 2015-2026 50SKYSHADES.COM — Reproduction, copying, or redistribution for commercial purposes is prohibited.

Asset Image

Image not found or type unknown

Apercu/SIPA/REX/Shutterstock

“The choice, which has not been made yet, will have to optimise requirements, calendar and resources.”

If it chooses to increase the pace of procurement, new helicopters could begin to arrive in the early 2020s, indicate army sources.

Speaking at a recent conference, Maj Gen Olivier de la Motte, commander of French army aviation, said although its need is less urgent – its Gazelle fleet is scheduled for retirement in 2028 – given the attrition from operations, notably in Mali, “it could be interesting to have a new helicopter in 2022”.

© 2015-2026 50SKYSHADES.COM — Reproduction, copying, or redistribution for commercial purposes is prohibited.

SOURCE: FLIGHTGLOBAL
ARTICLE LINK:
https://ut.50skyshades.com/news/manufacturer/france-considers-accelerating-light-helicopter-acquisition

© 2015-2026 50SKYSHADES.COM — Reproduction, copying, or redistribution for commercial purposes is prohibited.