

AFAC POSITION PAPER 03/2007

Issue: Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter Support for Chinook Operations

Background

- With the government's stated intention to purchase CH147 (Chinook) helicopters, it is timely to confirm an employment doctrine. A review of CF doctrine, and that of allies, along with consideration of our previous and the present day experience of our allies, reveals that the CH 147 is a most capable medium/heavy lift helicopter. It can rapidly transport troops, logistics supplies and equipment over large distances in a brief time period for maximum tactical/strategic advantage; however, the helicopter does have employment limitations.
- The Chinook, when laden, is not as manoeuvrable as lighter helicopters. Moreover it has a significant visual, audio, radar, and infra-red signature. Because of these characteristics, it is vulnerable to a variety of threats, including small arms fire and anti-aircraft defence systems. To address these challenges and to ensure mission success, the installation of self defence suites, the use of appropriate tactical flying techniques, the employment of armed escorts, and the assistance of reconnaissance helicopters may be required based upon the threat environment. In a benign environment the need for these measures would be minimal, but in one where the enemy forces have the capability to engage helicopters, they would be essential.
- A variety of self defence capabilities are available for installation in the CH147 including, door guns, threat warning devices, night vision systems, secure radios, navigation aids and armour. Tactical flying techniques would range from "contour flying" and flying out of weapons engagement ranges, to the use of "masking" techniques and tactical diversion. In hostile environments and where enemy forces have capable anti-aircraft capability, it may be essential to support the CH147 helicopter with responsive armed escort aircraft -- helicopters or fighters. Should the CH147 encounter a threat, the escort aircraft could suppress/destroy the threat while the CH147 takes evasive and/or self-defence actions.

AFAC Position

- Overall, the best solution to provide this capability is found in a capable and integrated tactical aviation force of mission-capable helicopters. The employment of reconnaissance helicopters to support Chinook operations will increase mission success and enhance survivability. These aircraft could reconnoitre flight paths and landing zones prior to or during the



mission to mitigate against a surprise encounter of enemy forces and to ensure that the landing zone is adequate and safe. Should such reconnaissance helicopters be armed, then they could equally be employed as armed escorts.

- Appropriately configured Griffon helicopters could perform such tasks as an interim capability, albeit limited in payload and available power. The best, more permanent solution is a capable tactical aviation force of reconnaissance, armed, medium lift helicopters. This is confirmed in CF tactical employment doctrine.
- Teaming Chinook helicopters with the Griffons, as an interim step, whether as an armed escort, a reconnaissance helicopter, or both, offers significant tactical advantage, and would enhance CH147 survivability and mission success.

Messages

- CH147 Chinook helicopters will provide a significant tactical transport capability but will also be vulnerable in a threat environment. Appropriate support is required to mitigate this threat.
- To provide an interim capability, Griffon helicopters should be equipped and employed for armed escort/reconnaissance missions to support the CH147 operations.
- Serious consideration should be given to the procurement of a fleet of armed, reconnaissance helicopters, to provide a more permanent and capable solution.

Developed by: Aviation Affairs Committee

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