

Marine Corps' new helicopter completes its first flight

By **Allison Barrie**, Fox News / www.foxnews.com/tech
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CH-53K King Stallion (Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation)

King Stallion, the U.S. Marine Corps' brand spanking new helicopter, completed its first flight Tuesday.

The Marines' new helo is incredibly advanced - it will be able to lift a whopping three times more weight than its predecessor.

Made by Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation, the CH-53K King Stallion prototype is also known by the less catchy name Engineering Development Model-1 (EDM-1).

King Stallion will be the Marine Corps' next-gen heavy lift helicopter and the goal is to give them the best heavy lift helo in the world. Ultimately, the Corps plans to have eight active duty squadrons, one training squadron, and one reserve squadron.

What's cool?

King Stallion will have a cruise speed of 141 knots and a range of about 530 miles.

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The CH-53K King Stallion will have similar physical dimensions as its predecessor, the CH-53E Super Stallion. It will also be powered by three engines, but with the upgraded engine power of the T408-GE-400s.

It has fourth-generation composite main rotor blades with anhedral tips and advanced airfoils. There's also a new tail rotor head and blades.

And there are a lot of innovations designed to improve crew and passenger protection. In addition to cutting-edge self-defense weapons, advanced lightweight armor is incorporated as well as enhanced ballistic protection. The troop seats and retracting landing gear are also engineered to be crashworthy.

This new helo will be capable of carrying 27,000 pounds –nearly three times the amount of its predecessor. It will be able to carry these massive loads over 110 nautical miles under challenging "hot and high" conditions.

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The King Stallion will also introduce new features like a modern glass cockpit. The airframe structure is a new hybrid composite that will reduce both weight and vibration.

Additionally, the helo features an improved hydraulics and fuel system, fly-by-wire flight controls and an advanced drive system with a split torque design main gearbox.

It will be capable of performing in the full spectrum of operating conditions while being low maintenance and highly reliable. The helicopter can also be deployed from a range of conditions whether a ship or a remote forward operating base. It will connect land to ship for the Marine Corp.

First flight

During King Stallion's maiden flight, over the course of 30 minutes the new helo maneuvered sideways, backward and forward while hovering up to 30 feet above the ground.

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The 2,000-hour flight test program will now begin full aircraft system qualification using four of the new helicopters.

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