

NH90 comprehensive upgrade programme launched

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Marignane, 13 June 2024 - NH Industries (NHI) and the NATO Helicopter Management Agency (NAHEMA) have signed a contract to launch the development and qualification of the NH90 Block 1 upgrade (also known as Software Release 3). NAHEMA acted on behalf of Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy. This programme is part of the NH90 evolution roadmap and constitutes a major upgrade in terms of capabilities for both the TTH and NFH variants of the NH90 combat helicopter.

“The signature of the SWR3 contract, which marks the launch of the NH90 Block 1 upgrade, is an important milestone for the NH90 programme and is a clear sign that our NATO customers trust the NH90 and plan on operating it for many more decades to come,” said Axel Aloccio, President of NHI and Head of NH90 Programme at Airbus Helicopters. “We have a clear plan to extend the life span of the NH90 up to 50 years and we will need to upgrade the aircraft to make sure it stays relevant on the battlefield of tomorrow. The Block 1 programme will cover the next ten to fifteen years. Beyond that horizon, we are also planning the Block 2 upgrade that will define the future evolutions of the platform and ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the battlefield of tomorrow,” he added.

The first phase of this 600 million Euro programme includes an upgrade of the NH90 communication suite and the integration of Data Link 22 allowing beyond line-of-sight interoperability without going through satellite communications. IFF Mod 5 Level 2 (the latest version of the device used to identify and track military aircraft) will also be integrated. Other upgrades will be available to the operators and include the integration of a latest generation electro optical system, a new dipping sonar and the integration of the MK 54 torpedo and the Marte ER anti-ship missile. The NH90 Block 1 will be able to navigate with a civil grade global navigation satellite system (GNSS) and flight management system.

The second phase of the programme, which is currently under finalisation, will consist of the deployment of the Block 1 configuration improvements on approximately 200 NH90s, both NFH and TTH, in total.

NHIndustries is the largest rotorcraft joint venture and it is responsible for the design, manufacturing and support of the NH90 helicopter, one of the leaders in the latest generation of military helicopters. The Company takes the best from the European rotorcraft and defence industry, being owned by Airbus Helicopters (62.5%), Leonardo (32%) and GKN Fokker (5.5%). Each company has a long aerospace pedigree and brings the top of its skills and expertise to the end product.

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