



The Bell V-280 Valor flew 214 hours and hit 305 kt (565 km) during demonstrations.

FLRAA Soars through Milestone B

By VFS Staff

The Army Program Executive Office (PEO) for Aviation announced on Aug. 2 that the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) program had been approved to enter the Engineering and Manufacturing Development (EMD) phase; this approval of the Milestone B Acquisition Decision Memorandum (ADM) signified that FLRAA was officially a program of record. FLRAA is the leading rotorcraft development program under the Department of Defense (DoD) Future Vertical Lift (FVL) program that was directed by Congress in 2008.

The Milestone B decision came after the successful FLRAA preliminary design review (PDR) in April (see “Path Ahead for FLRAA,” *Vertiflite*, July/Aug 2024) and a meeting of the Army Systems Acquisition Review Council (ASARC) in June. After reviewing FLRAA affordability, technological viability, threat projections and security, engineering, manufacturing, sustainment and cost risks, the ASARC confirmed that all sources of risk have been adequately addressed.

The Army awarded the FLRAA Weapon System Development contract to Bell Textron on Dec. 5, 2022 (see “FLRAA Tilts to Bell,” *Vertiflite*, Jan/Feb 2023), based on the risk reduction of its V-280 Valor technology demonstrator, which began flying in December 2017. The contract includes nine options, and the Milestone B approval allows the Army to exercise the first option, which includes detailed aircraft design and build of six prototype aircraft. The Army is planning for the first FLRAA flight in 2026 with low-rate initial production (LRIP) scheduled to begin in 2028 and initial fielding in 2030 for assault and medical evacuation (medevac) missions, supported by a modular open systems approach (MOSA). The Army will continue to review and refine the schedule as necessary based on the contract award and the latest program activities, the announcement stated.

“This an important step for FLRAA and demonstrates the Army’s commitment to our highest aviation modernization priority,” said the Army acquisition executive, the Honorable Douglas R. Bush, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (ASAALT). “FLRAA will provide assault and medevac capabilities for the future Army, adding significantly increased speed, range and endurance.”

“This is an exciting day for the Army... and more importantly for our Soldiers. The FLRAA provides truly transformational capability to Army aviators as we uphold the sacred trust with the Soldier on the ground,” said Maj. Gen. Michael C. McCurry, 17th chief of the US Army Aviation Branch. “Future battlefields require expanded maneuver, the ability to sustain and provide command and control across vast distances, and of course, evacuate our wounded. All of these apply to both conventional and special operations forces. With roughly twice the range and twice the speed [of the Army’s current helicopters], FLRAA brings unmatched combat capability to the joint force.”

“PM FLRAA and our Team of Teams across the aviation enterprise are working hard to make sure that we get it right,” said Brig. Gen. David Phillips, Program Executive Officer, Aviation. “We will deliver a next-generation combat capability that meets the Army’s goals for affordability, survivability, maintainability, reliability and safety.”

“The FLRAA Milestone B decision is another successful step of a deliberate modernization effort by the Army,” said Brig. Gen. Cain Baker, director for the FVL Cross Functional Team. “The many stakeholders, including academia and industry, have worked hard to ensure rigorous technology development and demonstration and have informed FLRAA requirements and affordability. FLRAA’s speed, reach and survivability will be key to transforming US Army maneuver.”