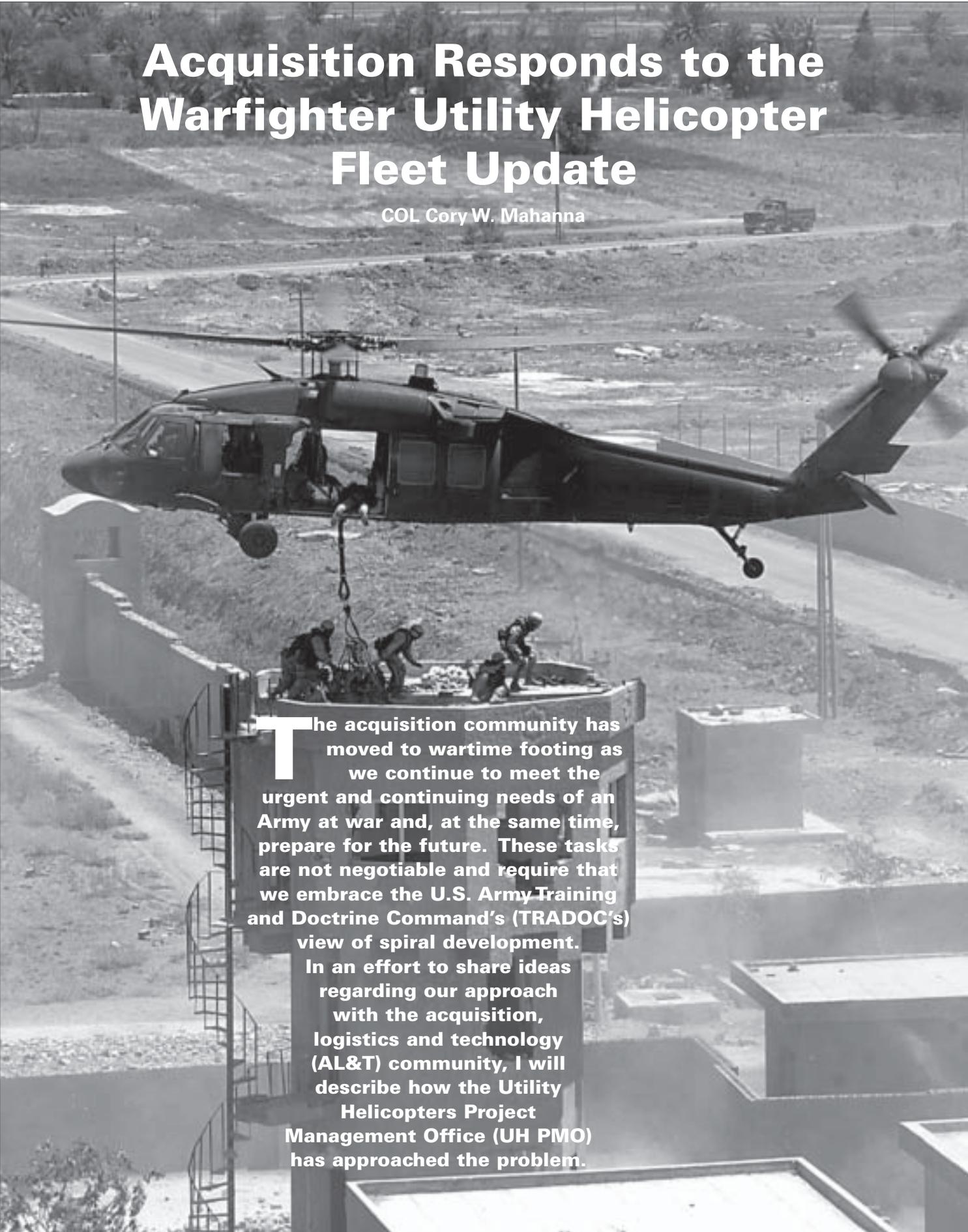


# Acquisition Responds to the Warfighter Utility Helicopter Fleet Update

COL Cory W. Mahanna



**T**he acquisition community has moved to wartime footing as we continue to meet the urgent and continuing needs of an Army at war and, at the same time, prepare for the future. These tasks are not negotiable and require that we embrace the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's (TRADOC's) view of spiral development. In an effort to share ideas regarding our approach with the acquisition, logistics and technology (AL&T) community, I will describe how the Utility Helicopters Project Management Office (UH PMO) has approached the problem.

## Current Status

The UH PMO has been the workhorse of the global war on terrorism. The numbers bear this assertion out with an operations tempo (OPTEMPO) of more than 111,000 hours and counting in support of *Operation Iraqi Freedom*. This is more than twice our planned Army program. Medical evacuation hours alone exceed 17,000 flight hours and the died-of-wounds rate is at an all-time low. These figures reflect the dedication of our aviation crewmen and the reliability of their aircraft. The lives they saved were not limited to U.S. personnel, but included those of our allies and adversaries as well. These actions win more than battles. Moreover, the UH fleet has been used in all phases of combat including sniper operations. The mission list is remarkable and we have seen assault, VIP, reconnaissance, resupply, quick-reaction force and even more specialized roles executed. Despite these diverse mission requirements, the UH fleet has been able to surge when required to meet operational requirements.

## Immediate Shortfalls

We've assessed what field commanders have told us about their current struggles. For example, LTG David H. Petraus, Chief of Security Transition-Iraq, recently said, "We face a tough, tenacious and sometimes suicidal foe." Accordingly, along with remarkable successes, we have suffered losses. One of our greatest losses could have been prevented with improved situational awareness (SA). This is a critical UH PMO area of concentration. Beyond network SA issues, we are faced with accelerated erosion of both rotor blades and engine turbines because of the inhospitable desert environment we must operate in. Although we have been able to meet warfighter needs, our OPTEMPO remains at

U.S. Army OPTEMPO remains at unprecedented levels and the Black Hawk helicopter has risen admirably to the challenge transporting troops, supplies and equipment to the front lines. (U.S. Army photo.)



unprecedented levels. Sustainment issues have become a constant concern.

A PM has to look beyond the current fight. LTG John M. Curran, TRADOC Futures Center Director, provided the following vision. "Our Army will be increasingly Joint, modular, network-centric, deployable and rotation-based to meet a 360-degree threat. It is likely that we will trade mass for connectivity and knowledge," he explained. "Quick adaptation to changing events will enable us to fight effectively in a global battlespace against nonstate actors. We must anticipate that our enemies will use niche technology areas to attack and that they will attack asymmetrically. Thus, our standard operating procedure will become simultaneous distributed operations," he concluded.

## Revising the Game Plan to Meet the Threat

Given current battlefield realities now and in the future, UH PMO's acquisition strategy has been revised. The tenets of our new strategy include:

- Acquire more utility helicopters.
- Use new technology (range, agility, payload, digitized non-line-of-sight communications and improved sustainment).
- Improve survivability (aviation survivability equipment, crashworthy external tanks, etc.)
- Recapitalize the fleet.

In spite of many UH-60A, Q and L model aircraft victories, the simple truth is that our Army is drastically under-resourced in the UH arena. The Army's recent aviation study underscored this fact. Accordingly, UH PMO has begun a rapid program to acquire both new UH-60 series aircraft and a new Light Utility Helicopter (LUH). We have activated a new product management team under LTC Brent Horrocks' leadership to head the LUH effort. Program Executive Officer for Aviation Paul Bogosian has already testified before Congress, and we are on a fast track to success in this area, planning to field new aircraft in 2005. Our goal is to rapidly acquire LUH aircraft for homeland defense



A solution to brownout is one of the program's priorities. (U.S. Army photo.)

and some Table of Distribution and Allowance (TDA) units. This should free up more UH-60s for combat and combat support in the theater of operations.

**New Technology and Improved Survivability**

We have begun numerous airframe, propulsion and cockpit improvements for the UH-60 fleet. These upgrades address emerging Future Combat Systems requirements, such as health-management capabilities, lift and interoperability as well as safety issues that involve operations in degraded visual environments and handling qualities. We have an immediate solution to solve the brownout SA problem.

Our first fix provides hover symbology for the crew. We will follow the hover symbology with more efforts to integrate man and machine, such as fly-by-wire controls. Regarding survivability, the self-sealing, single-point

pressure, external auxiliary fuel system is crash-worthy, has undergone extensive testing and is now being sent to the field. We are building more durability into our engines and adding an engine and auxiliary power unit barrier system aimed at mitigating the desert environment. These improvements will come with a new infrared suppressor system.

Additionally, large numbers of Blue Force Tracking systems have already been installed and more communications improvements are on the way. The integration of multifunctional displays, digital maps, Global Positioning Systems/inertial navigation, dual digital flight control computers with coupled flight control functionality and an enhanced laser warning system will mark the UH-60M.

Likewise, other aviation survival equipment is under review. Eventually, we intend to upgrade to a common cockpit compatible with the

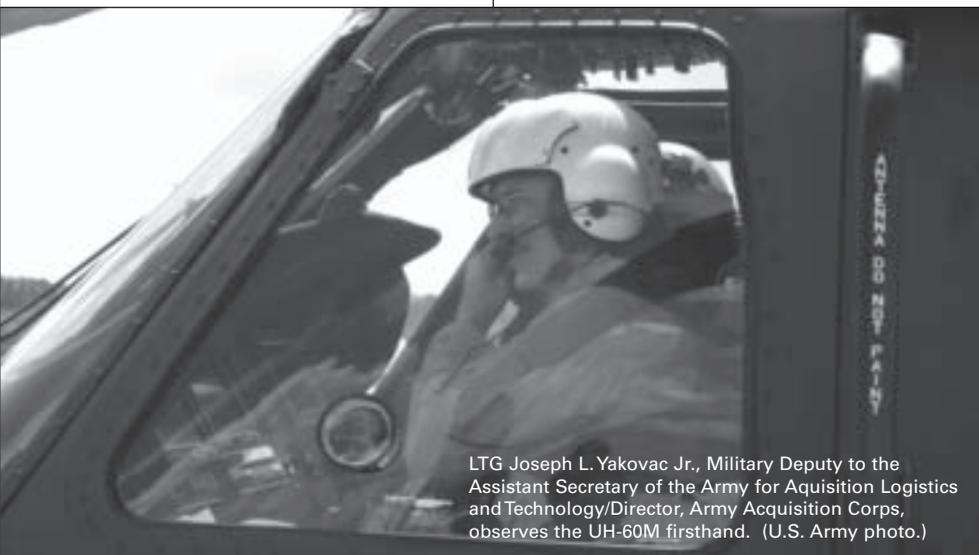
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CH-47 Chinook. We also have a new wide-cord blade, stormscope and cockpit voice recorder/flight data recorder or integrated vehicle health management system rounding out the fully bussed UH-60M. We have two UH-60Ms undergoing testing. Mike Herbst is the Acting Product Manager responsible for the balance of these improvements.

Our current timeline is to recapitalize 193 UH-60s before 2013. This is a major rebuild effort. To date, we have completed nine airframes and inducted 23 more into

the program. Recapitalization will help improve our readiness and maintain our combat overmatch. We will upgrade these aircraft with planned modification work orders and through modernized spares while they are in the program. I am working closely with COL Ray Woolery, Project Manager for Aviation RESET, to complete this program with minimal impact on our fighting force.

The bottom line: our fleet of 1,572 UH-60s will increase, we will RESET/recap and modernize the fleet and we will add an LUH for homeland security and TDA missions.



LTG Joseph L. Yakovac Jr., Military Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition Logistics and Technology/Director, Army Acquisition Corps, observes the UH-60M firsthand. (U.S. Army photo.)

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