

THE JOBS MARKET

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Last issue we detailed advanced flight training for RAAF and RAN pilots flying PC9s at RAAF Base Pearce in Western Australia which, on completion, the graduates are awarded their 'wings'. At this point, pilots from the three services diverge to their own in-service training programs. While the RAAF pilots go off to complete operational conversion to their fixed-wing aircraft, Navy and Army pilots are introduced to the world of helicopters.

After the Army disbanded their operation of King Airs recently and the Navy ceased operating HS 748s some time ago, the aircraft fleet of both services is entirely helicopters, although the Army will continue to have a small number of pilots seconded to fly King Airs, as well as flying instructors teaching on the CT4s at Tamworth. Similarly, the Navy will continue to have a small number of flying instructors teaching fixed wing on the CT4s at Tamworth as well as teaching the advanced flying program on the fixed-wing PC9s at RAAF Base Pearce.

It is an exciting time for those entering the rotor world of both the Army and Navy as new aircraft have arrived with more on the way. Army aviation has been extremely busy, introducing the Tiger ARH, and has also received the initial batch of MRH-90s with orders also being placed for more Chinook CH-47 Fs, while the Navy has accelerated plans to replace the ageing Sea Kings with MRH-90s and is also considering a replacement for the Sikorsky

Seahawks. We will talk more on the aircraft fleets later.

Presently, the Army and Navy operate independent helicopter flight-training programs using the 35-year-old Kiowa and 25-year-old Squirrel respectively as initial training platforms. There is an increasing recognition that these are inadequate aircraft to train the new generation of pilots who will be flying state-of-the-art Tiger ARHs, MRH-90s and the coming replacement for the Navy Seahawk. Serious consideration is being given to the formation of a Joint Helicopter School (JHS) to train both Army and Navy helicopter pilots under a project named Air 9000 which is looking globally at all aspects of helicopter operation by the ADF.

However, for this discussion, we will focus on the training systems as they currently stand.

Firstly, let's look at how the Army does things. The Army's aspiring aviators complete BFTS with their RAAF and Navy counterparts at Tamworth. Following this, the Army pilots remain at Tamworth to complete

Intermediate Pilot Course (IPC), which is conducted on the CT4 and lasts for 12 weeks. Approximately another 40 hours of flying training are completed in this phase with a focus on advanced navigation (especially low level), and advanced instrument flying. Following satisfactory performance, the trainees then head to the School of Army Aviation at Oakey in Queensland with approximately 150 hours of flight time under their belts. This is where the Army pilots will get their first taste of helicopter flying in the Bell Kiowa.

The program at Oakey is a significant one, with three training programs to complete before the pilot is a fully operational squadron pilot. The first training program (also the longest) is the Helicopter Qualification Course (HQC), which comprises 104 flying hours in the Kiowa over 24 weeks. The course introduces students to the basics of helicopter flying, developing and refining basic flying skills. During the final elements of the course, advanced skills are expected to be developed and tactical flying is introduced. Following successful completion of HQC, Army pilots are awarded their 'wings'.

The next phase for Army pilots is Operational Type Transition Course (OTT) where the now 'winged' Army pilots will be converted to their first operational type – Chinook CH-47, Black Hawk S-70 or, one of the newer Tiger ARH or MRH-90.

Helicopter training for





This program makes extensive use of advanced simulators as well as actually flying the aircraft. OTT will take 12 weeks with candidates typically flying around 50 hours.

The final phase of training is the Regimental Officers Basic Course (ROBC) which again lasts 12 weeks comprising 30 to 40 hours of flight training. The focus at ROBC is tactical flying – teaching the trainees how to operate the aircraft in support of Army and other ADF units.

In all of the courses at Oakey, other core basic helicopter skills such as night-vision

training, door gunnery, roping and rappelling are taught and perfected.

Navy pilots commence helicopter flying at HMAS Albatross following graduation and award of their 'wings' at RAAF Pearce after completing a total of approximately 230 hours of flying training on both the CT4 and then the turboprop PC-9. It is interesting to note the fact that Navy pilots arrive at Basic Helicopter School with more flight time than their Army counterparts who will typically have 140 hours when they arrive at Oakey. Also, the fact that Navy pilots complete the full RAAF 'wings' flight training program flying the higher performing 300-knot turboprop PC-9. Part of the rationale for this is that most Navy helicopters are flown single pilot and a higher standard of instrument flying is demanded in the maritime environment. It is fair to say that an extremely high standard of skill and airmanship is demanded in both environments, just that different areas might have particular focus in each service.

The Navy helicopter-training program in structure mirrors very much the Army helicopter training program. First, Navy pilots complete their initial helicopter flying on the Pilot Basic Rotary Wing Conversion Course flying the Squirrel AS 350 aircraft. Following completion of this, an advanced rotary conversion training program is undertaken again, flying the Squirrel.

Total duration of both the basic and advanced training programs are approximately nine months. Fundamentally the Navy pilots learn the same skills as their Army counterparts, but clearly with a focus on maritime operations.

The final training program for Navy helicopter pilots is operational flying training to the Sea Hawk, Sea King or now the MRH-90. It is in this final phase that Navy pilots learn to operate in a multi-crew environment with naval observers who join them in the cockpit.

As mentioned earlier, it is a great time to enter the world of the rotor head in either the Army or Navy with large aircraft orders being made. In the Army world, seven Chinook CH-47Fs have been ordered as well as 16 Tiger ARHs already delivered, with another six on the way, and the Black Hawk replacement MRH-90 deliveries well underway with a total of 40 to come. The Navy have ordered six MRH-90s to replace the ageing Sea Kings and a replacement for the Sea Hawk is presently being considered.

Don't miss next issue's high-powered article – fast-jet training for RAAF pilots.

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Army and Navy pilots

