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Lebanon Switches to R44 for Army Pilot Training

Torrance, CA—The Lebanese Army has purchased two Robinson R44 Raven II helicopters for primary flight training of Army pilots. General Nouhad Zebian, Air Force Commander, recently visited the Robinson factory to tour the production facility and accept delivery of the Army's new aircraft. General Zebian is a certified helicopter pilot and personally performed the acceptance flight on one of the two R44 helicopters.

The Raven IIs will be immediately integrated into the the Army's pilot training program. As before, the Army will conduct the first year of student pilot training in a simulator. However, the second year training phase will now incorporate 100 flight hours in an R44. In the past, student pilots transitioned from the simulator environment directly into the Army's large military helicopters. The operational cost was extremely high.

The R44's much lower fuel consumption and easy maintenance requirements will provide significant savings in direct operating costs. In addition, the switch to R44 helicopters for ab initio training will eliminate the high financial risk associated with placing novice pilots at the controls of sophisticated military aircraft with replacement values greatly exceeding the acquisition cost of a new R44.

"The R44 is an excellent machine for our pilots to complete their first 100 hours of actual flying," remarked General Zebian. "And with 100 hours in the Raven, they will be much better prepared for their third year of training in our larger, military helicopters."

During months when flight training programs are not scheduled, the Lebanese Army intends to use its new R44 helicopters for other missions including border control, patrol of coastal areas, fire surveys, surveillance of illegal drug plantations, medical assistance, media access, and VIP transport. Once the R44s have been in service in Lebanon for a reasonable period of time, General Zebian anticipates demand for the aircraft will necessitate the purchase of additional R44s for the Army's training program and other missions.

General Zebian was accompanied by several Lebanese Army executive officials at the Robinson factory including General Ghassan Al Mahtar, General Antoine Bou Jawdeh, Colonel Gaby el Kahi, and Major Imad Moubarak. The new aircraft will be based at the Rayak Air Force Base in Bekka Valley, Lebanon.

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