

Helicopter Flight Simulation Centre

On 23 October the (UK) Ministry of Defence announced an over £90 million investment in a world-leading helicopter simulation centre to help train the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy helicopter pilots of the future.

Simulators put pilots through their paces, replicating extreme real-life scenarios, from flying in blizzards or under enemy fire to dealing with power failures and electronic warfare.

It is understood that this will sustain 70 jobs at the Medium Support Helicopter Aircrew Training Facility based at RAF Benson in South Oxfordshire.

Defence, Equipment and Support (DES), the MOD's procurement organisation, signed a contract amendment with simulator specialist CAE Aircrew Training Services to deliver training for Chinook, Puma and Merlin aircrews at a purpose-built facility, extending the use of CAE's current contract for another eight years.

Equipment here provides a realistic representation of the operating environments the crews will fly in, including emergency situations such as the effects of icing and rotor blade damage, the impact of gun or missile fire and electronic warfare, total electrics failure and fuel management issues.

Finally, it is understood that the contract will deliver training for Chinook and Puma aircrews until the Puma planned out-of-service date. Training for the Merlin Mk3 will continue at the facility for at least two more years as the Royal Navy transitions from the Mk3 to the Mk4 helicopter.

Picture caption

The helicopter flight simulator at RAF Benson.

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