

UH-72 Life-Cycle Strategy

Army National Guard



NGAUS

Fiscal Year 2026 Requirements for the Army National Guard



▲ South Carolina Army National Guard Soldiers and State Urban Search and Rescue Task Force rescuers conduct air-rescue training and hoisting operations aboard a UH-72B Lakota light-utility helicopter, South Carolina National Guard Army Aviation Support Facility, Donaldson Center, Greenville, South Carolina.

Background

The UH-72 Lakota fleet in the Army National Guard Security and Support (S&S) Battalions operates across 49 States and Territories. They are fielded with UH-72A/B aircraft and continue to demonstrate its versatility, reliability, and cost-effectiveness across a range of missions including reconnaissance, surveillance, air movement, search and rescue, command and control, force generation (training), and installation support.

As the US increases commitment to protect its borders, China nears operational capacity to invade Taiwan by 2027, and other geopolitical threats and risk increase – the military leans more heavily on Lakota to perform more complex HLS/D support to protect our borders and respond to

Continued ►

The Issue

The UH-72 Lakota serves as the principal enabler to the Army National Guard Security and Support Battalions (S&S). The S&S Battalions conduct critical Homeland Defense missions using the UH-72 Lakota. Missions include reconnaissance, air movement, casualty evacuation, search and rescue, and command and control in support of local, state, and federal agencies. As the earliest fielded Lakota aircraft approach 20 years in service, the Lakota program noticeably lacks a funded strategy to address common fleet management issues including long-term sustainment, block upgrade, modernization, and mitigation of aircraft attrition. The implementation of a long-term life-cycle sustainment and management strategy for Lakota, designed similarly to other Army aircraft fleet strategies, mitigates the acceleration of operating and support costs that are typical as all fleets age.

Recommendation

ARNG Designation



The National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) urges Congress to:

- Deliver 8 additional UH-72B (New or Remanufactured) to ARNG Security and Support (S&S) Battalions
- Complete or Install all remaining UH-72A MEP equipment upgrades (Approx 91)
- Integrate and install essential MEP capability (ICW ESM-80) for each of the currently and soon to be fielded (20)
- UH-72B Security and Support Battalion aircraft in the ARNG
- Direct Army to execute all testing, certification, and conduct gap analysis to validate UH-72B (using UH-72A to B Renew aircraft and specifications) for deployability to non-permissive mission environments



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devastating disaster relief operations. However, questions asked in FY25 NDAA concerning long-term sustainment, cost effective modernization, and deployability have not been sufficiently answered. The Lakota still lacks a funded strategy to address common fleet management issues including a tech insertion, obsolesce, block upgrade, or a long-term sustainment or fleet modernization strategy. It still has not published or provided an assessment of deployability options (mitigation and modifications) for Lakota (UH-72A or UH-72B) to source OCONUS missions outside permissive threat environments - per the FY25 NDAA and appropriation.

Modernization of the ARNG MTOE fleet enables improved performance, insertion of technologies, and reduces fleet operating cost over the life cycle. A strategy that infuses new UH-72B aircraft into ARNG units, cascades low time UH-72As to replace attritted training fleet or TDA organization aircraft and harvests serviceable components for reuse to deliver newbuilt improved UH-72B Lakota to the ARNG units at a reduced cost. Modernization will mitigate the effects of a maturing fleet while ensuring the ARNG is prepared for the future. The UH-72B incorporates materiel improvements that add capacity for new systems, improve crew safety and survivability, and reduce maintenance burden and operating cost.

Install updated Lakota mission equipment package (MEP) to correct obsolescence. Of the 212 UH-72 Lakota in the ARNG, 107 are modified with Mission Equipment Package (MEP) equipped UH-72As – 18 are down due to obsolescence (+3 per month). The MEP capability provides essential systems installed to perform the S&S Battalions primary reconnaissance and timely observation and reporting – capabilities greatly needed for border security, search and rescue and many other required missions. The ARNG purchased all the required MEP components. However, ARNG lacks predictable funding to complete installation.



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