Helicopter Pilot Career Outlook

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Helicopter Pilot Careers 2007

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Helicopter Pilot Outlook

The helicopter is the most versatile machine on the planet. There is nothing more exciting than flying them. The flexibility of helicopters in many roles they perform makes them an important part of the aviation industry. Helicopters are used in a large variety of applications that includes but is not limited to the following:

- Fire fighting
- Agricultural Application
- Sightseeing / tourism
- Personal/Corporate/Business transportation
- Traffic reporting
- Electronic news gathering
- Military aviation
- Law Enforcement
- Aerial observation
- Emergency medical services
- Heavy lifting for oil, utility and lumber industries.

And the list goes on.

Although it seems like the world has enough Oil and Gas supplies to last forever, the real picture reveals a different story. We are running out of these everyday. More than 40% of these natural resources are yet to be explored and used. Helicopters are used to drill wells, lift heavy ores, etc. So, an increase in the Oil and Gas exploration will result in an increase for pilots who are trained to fly helicopters.

Security is the most important issue in the corporate and political world today and it is also affecting the world's economy. Helicopters are used in law enforcement, aerial observation, airport security maintenance,

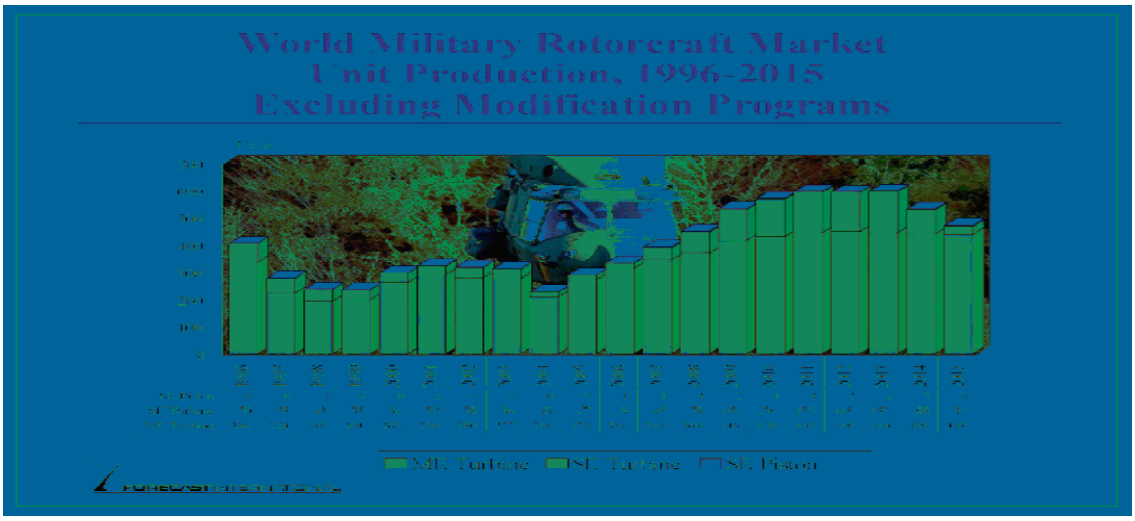
personal/corporate/business transportation, traffic reporting, fire fighting etc and hence they assist in enforcing law and order. They are also used for agricultural and Forestry operations.

Helicopters are also a major part of the military aviation because of the diverse roles they can take up. They perform important tasks in air-sea rescues, patrolling, reconnaissance, the evacuation of the wounded, and the transportation of personnel and equipment to the battlefield. They are also used for domestic purposes like electronic news-gathering, fire fighting and site seeing. One can travel and go around places that do not have road access and are unreachable.

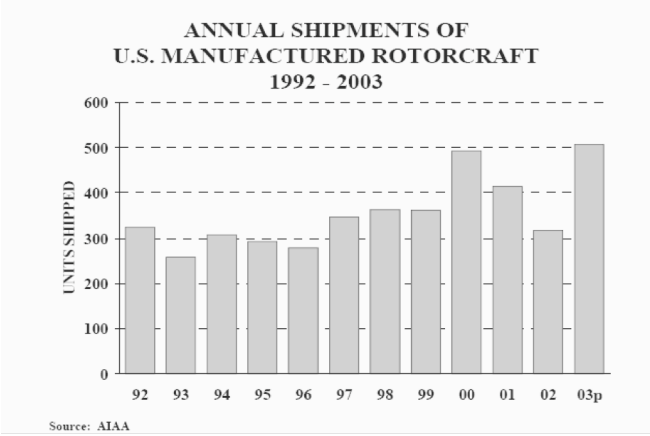
By many accounts (some of which are stated above), the rotorcraft industry is on an upswing. The demand for offshore support is picking up. Commercial, corporate and private operators are buying aircraft. In addition, U.S. military is on the verge of several major acquisitions itself. Taken together, those factors should mean brightening employment for working in the helicopter industry. According to a report (published on researchandmarkets.com), demand for composites in the aerospace market is expected to grow by more than 10% in the next five years due to several new aircraft models with high percentages of composites usage. So, eventually, there is going to be a steep increase in the number of trained pilots who can operate these new aircraft.

According to a recent report published on the Federal Aviation Administration website, there is a huge need for skilled pilots. The number of pilots (only) is expected to increase at an annual rate of 1.2 percent over 12 year forecast period, from 8,586 in 2004 to 9,870 in 2016. To cater to this need, the manpower has to be trained on the essential skills.

The story of the rotorcraft manufacturing industry over the next 10 years will really be about two market segments with distinctly different outlooks, the military market segment and the civil market segment. Meanwhile the industry itself continues to undergo realignment, through mergers and acquisitions and joint ventures. According to a report by forecast international the following graph shows the direction in which all this is headed.



The Aerospace Industries Association of America indicated a 51.1 percent increase in total units shipped in the 2004 preliminary calendar, as compared to the total number of units shipped in 2003.



The average value per helicopter shipped in 2004 was $651,729.

A 51 percent increase in the number of units will directly imply that there is an enormous requirement of manpower that will be able to handle these many helicopters and use them for various purposes. The number of pilots certified to fly only helicopters was reported to have increased by 8.5 percent in 2004 as compared to 2003.

The recent upgrades in technology trends have greatly benefited the rotorcraft market. Technology inventions like the GPS (Global Positioning System - which is currently the only fully functional satellite navigation system. More than two dozen GPS satellites are in medium Earth orbit, transmitting signals allowing GPS receivers to determine the receiver's location, speed and direction) and free flight enable helicopters to fly at ease, increasing community acceptance and enhancing the utility of helicopter operations. Free flight is a developing air traffic control method that does not use centralized control. Instead, parts of airspace are distributed and reserved, dynamically and automatically using computer

communication, to ensure the required separation between aircrafts. So, as long as the helicopters are equipped with GPS and are on a Free Flight plan, its total freedom to fly and never get lost.

Another emerging technology innovation is the CAT I Precision Approach. This approach provides accurate guidance information in visibility as low as one-half mile and a ceiling as low as 200 feet. While the ultimate goal is to achieve zero-ceiling and zero-visibility operations, this is a very impressing development. As a result it is much easier for the pilots and the helicopters to better utilize the airport space, which forms an important ingredient in the future of rotorcraft industry.

Next question right up in you mind must be about the paycheck. Here's the answer. The findings in the table are according to the ROTOR & WING'S SALARY SURVEY.

Table 1. AVERAGE PILOT SALARY BY U.S. REGION

		Piston Helicopter	Single-Engine Helicopter	Multi-Engine (Light-Medium)	Multi-Engine (Medium-Heavy)
Alaska/Hawaii	Civil/Gov't				
	Commercial		$78,670		
	Corporate		$80,000		
East Coast	Civil/Gov't	$47,900	$61,000	$74,000	$72,500
	Commercial		$59,400	$61,580	$65,810
	Corporate		$67,380	$86,270	$107,500
Great Lakes	Civil/Gov't	$47,900	$66,800	$78,500	$100,000
	Commercial	$12,000	$49,000	$54,000	$50,500
	Corporate	$40,000	$70,000	$81,000	$105,050
Midwest	Civil/Gov't	$46,000	$75,000	$75,000	$75,000
	Commercial	$36,300	$53,530	$60,000	$62,500
	Corporate	$47,840	$73,000	$81,000	$80,500
Northwest	Civil/Gov't	$74,125	$55,000	$48,750	$49,200
	Commercial	$22,800	$67,500	$65,000	$51,125
	Corporate	$48,000	$55,000	$61,430	$50,000
Texas/Louisiana	Civil/Gov't	$53,125	$61,500	$75,000	$66,500
	Commercial	$42,000	$56,330	$62,500	$72,000
	Corporate	$75,000	$57,500	$61,250	$90,500
Southeast	Civil/Gov't		$64,790	$77,500	$92,500
	Commercial		$50,000	$55,800	
	Corporate		$50,000	$60,000	
Southwest	Civil/Gov't	$68,500	$69,615	$64,000	
	Commercial		$46,780	$54,150	$57,500
	Corporate		$45,050	$50,000	
West Coast	Civil/Gov't	$75,000	$70,500	$50,000	$50,000
	Commercial	$22,800	$67,500	$61,650	$57,500
	Corporate	$50,000	$55,000	$61,430	

So, being a helicopter pilot is not only exciting but also a promising career in terms of pay rate and growth.

The new helicopter models in the market are bringing the excitement back in air, into the rotorcraft industry. Here are some examples:

- Sikorsky S-92: This is the newest aircraft in Sikorsky's civil product line. A medium twin-engine aircraft, the S-92 sets a new standard for safety, comfort and reliability. The S-92 fleet spans several countries, and performs a number of missions, including Offshore Oil, Corporate VIP, Head of State and Search and Rescue. Various uses imply various models. Here they go!




- The US101 – the name given to the American variant of the highly successful EH101 medium-lift helicopter – is designed as a highly alert and tactic military aircraft. The US101 Team is a collaboration of Lockheed Martin Systems Integration - an experienced aerospace platform and systems integrator - with two of the world's leading helicopter manufacturers, Agusta Westland and Bell Helicopter Textron.

- The BA 609 is a versatile tiltrotor aircraft providing operators greatly improved performance with twice the speed and range of conventional helicopters. The aircraft in standard configuration is fully pressurized and de-iced. With its rotors in the vertical position, the tiltrotor is able to take-off, land and hover like a traditional helicopter. With the rotors in the horizontal position, the tiltrotor is able to fly with the high speed and range of a turboprop fixed wing airplane. The transition from helicopter mode to airplane mode takes 20 seconds, as does the transition from airplane mode to helicopter mode.

So, why become a Helicopter pilot at all? You might have been thinking about how things and birds can fly around in air while we always walk and run.

Sometimes when you are in the middle of a big traffic hassle, you might have seen an aircraft whisk above your head and thought, about why you are not in that aircraft. You might have even thought that flying would be a daring to attempt or might be very hard to learn or even very expensive to pursue as a career. Well, no more, Flying is easy to learn, affordable and safe. But another thing to remember is that, you need to decide what you want at the earliest and get on to the path to achieve it. Nothing comes for free. So, training is a must to become a pilot. Proper training might just help you fulfill the goal of your life and get you a lifetime opportunity. So, get on to your heels, and get ready to head off to an exciting and promising career as a Helicopter Pilot.