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## Marine Corps to deploy heavy-lifting drone helicopter

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The Marine Corps will deploy its first-ever cargo-lifting drone into a war zone when it sends the K-Max helicopter to Afghanistan next month.

The heavy-lift drone chopper, made by Lockheed Martin Corp. and Kaman Aerospace Corp., recently wrapped up a five-day evaluation study in Arizona to prove its cargo-carrying capability in conditions similar to those it would be expected to encounter in Afghanistan.

K-Max exceeded the Navy and Marines' requirement to deliver 6,000 pounds of cargo a day.

"K-Max has the capability to quickly deliver cargo, thus getting troops off the roads and allowing them to focus on other missions," said Navy Rear Adm. Bill Shannon, division executive officer for unmanned aviation and strike weapons.

The K-Max team of mission commanders and aircraft operators have been undergoing training and flight tests at a base in Twentynine Palms, according to a Lockheed release.

Lockheed and Kaman teamed in 2007 to transform Kaman's manned power-lift helicopter into a drone capable of autonomous or remote-controlled cargo delivery. Kaman designed the airframe and Lockheed designed the helicopter's mission management and control systems.

K-Max is the latest robotic aircraft to join the military's expanding drone fleet, which includes high-flying spy jets, small hand-launched planes and missile-firing hunter aircraft.

"We are extremely honored to have been selected for deployment by the Navy," said Sal Bordonaro, division president at Kaman Helicopters. "We are committed to providing the Marine Corps with the lifesaving unmanned capability of our proven airframe, reducing the risk to our forces by taking the cargo resupply mission from the ground to the air."

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