

Canada nixes Black Hawk helicopters

by UPI

OTTAWA - Canada's Defense Department has declined an informal offer of six Black Hawk helicopters for use in the Afghanistan conflict, Ottawa media said. The U.S. Sikorsky company reportedly made the offer to deliver them by 2009, but an unidentified Defense Department source told the Ottawa Citizen it was decided to wait for larger Boeing-made Chinook helicopters. "The Black Hawk helicopter does not meet the medium/heavy-lift capability required by the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan," the source said. The U.S. military relies heavily on Black Hawks, which can carry 11 troops or haul a 105-millimeter howitzer plus ammunition. The Chinook can carry as many as 32 troops, and also Canada's new 155-millimeter howitzer, the report said. At a NATO meeting earlier this month in Brussels, Canada announced it would only extend its combat role in Afghanistan past 2009 through 2011 if allies provided at least 1,000 more combat troops and aircraft for reconnaissance and transport. Insurgents routinely target ground transport convoys, but have had much less success with aircraft, defense officials said.

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