

X2 to face rivals for Army order

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Sikorsky Aircraft Corp., based in Stratford, made it official Thursday that it will put its X2 helicopter up against a growing field of competitors for the expected [U.S. Army Armed Aerial Scout](#) contract.

The X2 is Sikorsky's newest helicopter that still is being developed. It features counter-rotating rotor blades on top of the aircraft and is being tested at Sikorsky's Florida facility. The company said it responded to the [Pentagon's](#) request for information March 17, but announced the move during the [Army Aviation Association of America's](#) annual convention in Texas.

Paul Jackson, a Sikorsky spokesman, said the X2 has been clocked at 130 knots and is expected to challenge the world-speed record this summer.

"We've known that for a while now," said Raymond Jaworowski, a senior aerospace analyst with Forecast International in Newtown, of the X2 competing for the potential contract.

Sikorsky possibly will face competition from at least two other competitors, and possibly three, for what is expected to develop into a 368-aircraft order.

He said Eurocopter is partnering with Lockheed Martin Corp., and Boeing Co. also has expressed interest in going after the contract. Bell Helicopter has yet to declare its intentions, Jaworowski said.

Jaworowski said the favorite for the contract right now would have to be Eurocopter, because its design is based on the UH72, a helicopter the Army buys.

"I wouldn't count out the X2," Jaworowski said. "But you have to wonder about timing."

Jaworowski said depending on when the Army wants the aircraft could affect Sikorsky's chances. If it's a longer timeline, the company could stand a better chance, compared with a shorter timeline, because the Army may prefer a helicopter that's in production.

After the Pentagon fields information from potential bidders for the contract, it is expected to create a request for proposals and then hold a contest to select the new scout.

Currently, the Army uses Bell's Kiowa Warrior and has created a program to extend the life of these choppers.