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The US Navy (USN) on 14 September announced plans to deploy its new multimission Sikorsky MH-60R Seahawk and MH-60S Knight Hawk helicopters to US Naval Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi from 18 September 2012 to December 2013.

The HSL-51 Warlords helicopter squadron at NAF Atsugi will replace their SH-60B and SH-60F Seahawk helicopters with the newer and more capable MH-60R and MH-60S helicopters.

"Upon completion of this helicopter transition, US Navy aircraft forward deployed to Japan will be the most advanced and capable aircraft in the current inventory," the USN said in a statement.

The deployment is part of the navy's master aviation plan to provide forward deployed forces with the most capable platforms. Under the Obama Administration's strategic 'pivot' to the Asia-Pacific region, US forces in Japan are expected to play a key role in protecting US strategic interests in the region.

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