

## AVSIM Commercial Aircraft Review

# *AlphaSim Blackhawk*



### Product Information

**Publisher:** [AlphaSim](#)

**Description:** Helicopter Add-on.

**Download Size:**  
75 MB

**Format:**  
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**Simulation Type:**  
FS9

**Reviewed by:** [Chris Kiehl](#) AVSIM Contributing Reviewer - September 18, 2008

## Introduction:

In 1972, the United States Army decided it needed a new helicopter fitting the UTTAS or Utility Tactical Transport Aircraft System. This new aircraft would replace the venerable, though imperfect, UH-1 'Huey'. By the mid 1970's, an evaluation was being conducted and prototypes from Sikorsky and Boeing were competing for the new contract. The Sikorsky UH-60 Blackhawk was selected over the Boeing model, and entered official US Army service in 1979.

Throughout the 1980's, the Blackhawk underwent several operations and upgrades, and quickly became a widely used and popular helicopter. Throughout the 1990's, the Blackhawk was further utilized and upgraded, and made famous for its role in the 1993 Somalia conflict in Africa. The aircraft was further popularized in 2001, when the movie Blackhawk Down came out. The Blackhawk was used heavily for the film, and was showcased with more camera time than any movie featuring a Blackhawk before it.

Not just due to the movie, but the fact that the Blackhawk is a much tougher and safer platform, I have grown to like this aircraft very much over the years. It's a good looking helicopter, and anything by Sikorsky gets my recognition. On top of all this, the Blackhawk has been doing a decent job for years.

Now, I'm happy to review Alphasim's new rendition of a very interesting aircraft, and we'll go into a decent amount of detail looking through it.

## Installation & Documentation:

Alphasim has had a general tendency change here. Now, some of their aircraft are beginning to include a simple .exe or executable type installer, which the Blackhawk has. You simply download via your username and information from their site after purchase, and inside a zipped folder is the installer. Open this with a simple double click, and you'll soon be flying. At the end of this installer, you'll get the option to read the manual; I'd suggest doing this just.



Documentation is by no means limited, and quite masterfully done. You'll get a very detailed instruction manual, with information on everything you could ask for. From a bit of history on the bird itself, to panel operations, to the different variants included; I don't think you'll be disappointed here. I'll simply let the screenshots do the talking.

### **Aircraft:**

I have only seen a real Blackhawk fly overhead, never up close or inside. For this, I'll be going more off of Hollywood, and one of my favorite war movies: Blackhawk Down. The movie itself includes so much actual Blackhawk footage, that I'll be comparing the model to what I've seen there. Right off the bat, the visual model is just stunning. All of the lines, little animations, and effects really come together to immerse you. I'll do my best here, but many screenshots will help me out here.

Included are 9 different variants, with different model and paint configurations. Several different texture variants are here, including a few different model variations such as with tanks, without tanks, with fuel probe and without, and with and without doors. Included in the textures area, are actual US Army SOAR paints. I've chosen the SOAR variant without tanks or doors as my flagship.



All the regular animations one could expect are included; nice suspension and wheel animations, and even the rear stabilator is animated and automatic and functions based on airspeed. All the little details on this detail-heavy Blackhawk have been faithfully modeled, and each model type shows this with small but noticeable differences.



I simply love the rotor detail and animations. When static, they are simply rotors; they don't show pitch change or cyclic movement. However, when they're running, it's a totally different story. You will see a nice rotor texture when spinning, but you'll also get subtle and awesome animations. When you add collective, you will actually see the rotor blades 'lean' upwards a bit under the pressure of the pitch change. When you move the cyclic, you will notice a very subtle, but actual change in the rotor disk position.

Additionally, all of the panel lines and rivets are clearly textured, but not overdone. The balance between detail you can see and not being too much, is nicely accomplished; all the little things you can see from real life pictures for the different model variants is nicely represented. No, I'm not looking at technical drawings, nor am I an expert, but it all looks good to me.



## 2D Panels:

One thing I absolutely love here is the limited need for a 2D panel. I'm not a big 2D panel fan, and with the included Virtual Cockpit, you simply won't need a heavy 2D setup. There is, however, a very limited 2D 'hood' view, and a few sub-panel pop-ups.



Once again, you won't need much from the 2D department, unless you simply love them. I'll let the shots do the talking, but you won't miss it once you see the VC coverage.

## Virtual Cockpit:

The virtual cockpit included with Alphasim's Blackhawk is quite exquisite, in my opinion. No shortage of detail or beautiful crafting, and almost all of the important controls are functional. What I mean here, is that all the necessary controls and switches for 'jump in and go' helicopter flying are clickable and functional.

However, since the Blackhawk is an extremely complex machine, much of the VC items are simply there for show and have little or no functionality. This does not disappoint me with a simulated helicopter as it might with a piston engine aircraft, as I have no real idea on how to start a complex helicopter such as a Blackhawk.





Here's the included modeled cabin, and a couple other shots; a nice panorama of the flight deck from the right seat.

The radios were legible to me at 0.60 zoom, where I flew the Blackhawk from, but even back at further zoom levels, everything is still quite useful. There is no 2D panel, so you'll get used to the Blackhawk VC; it will quickly become your office.

Speaking of the radios, they do use an odd type of clicking function. You right and left click to adjust the frequencies up or down, but you must first give the knob an initial click so that it moves. Once it moves, you must move to the new click point. For instance, if you want to tune up, you must first left click the switch to toggle it up. Once it's moved there, it remains and you simply left click it over and over to adjust the frequency. Once you right click the switch, it will then toggle down and you continue right clicking the switch to reduce the frequency. Interesting manner in which to adjust the radios, and it can be difficult and tedious to do if there's wind, but it does work.



Everything is crisp and beautiful at all zoom levels.

Included in the VC is a neat MFD, or Multi Function Display panel. This panel will give you nice flight directors and horizontal situation indicators, a functioning hover gauge, and other useful information. This part of the VC is like a Heads Up Display, without the 'heads-up' part. It can be a bit difficult to read, however, and this is simply another area where Flight Simulator is a bit limited.

The MFD features several realistically modeled modes that do function, and even a non-functional FLIR screen is included. The FLIR or Forward Looking Infrared operation cannot be accurately portrayed, once again due to simulator limitations. Additionally, there is a functional storm scope.

Another area I liked with the VC, was the night lighting. A very soft and neat green floodlamp soaks the cockpit at night with an almost soothing hue of green. Additionally, there is a modeled cabin for each ship, so you can even try riding in the back area like a soldier would.



Here are the above mentioned MFD, and green night lights. In the final shot here, you'll see the Storm scope on the left, and the MFD in FLIR mode on the right side.

### Flight Dynamics:

Flying the Alphasim Blackhawk is similar to flying any other FS Helicopter. It behaves like many other helicopters like the default 206, except it's far bigger. It does take a little getting used to, but after a little bit of flight time, I had things ironed out nicely. Obviously, I have no real Blackhawk time, nor do I have any time in any real helicopter. However, I do like to think that I have a general idea of the basics, and I have flown FS helicopters for a while.



The cyclic inputs are very sensitive in my opinion, and the only thing to get used to. Banking and pitching are responsive once you have the idea down, and keeping her straight and level won't be an issue. For a large ship, I imagine it's very maneuverable, even in real life. It's also quite fast, being able to cruise comfortably at 130-150 KIAS, and that's not

necessarily using full power.



I was able to accomplish smooth pattern work in only an hour or two, with a little practice. The helicopter does tend to want to sink or climb unless you stay right on top of it every second, but due to a helicopter's inherent instability, this is probably a little more realistic. Once you've gotten a bit more time in the ship, trying some of that dangerous tactical, low level flying can be a fun challenge. Trying to bring the Blackhawk to a dead stop from 120 KIAS is a challenge, but fun once you get it down.

#### **Sounds:**

Another stunning achievement with this package is the sound. Done by Turbine Sound Studios, this is not a surprise. I like all the sound work done by these folks, as they usually get direct recordings.

Once again, I haven't heard one up close, but the sound from the movie was quite well done. From there, I'll draw a bit of insight. Every facet of what you could and should expect from a turbine helicopter is effectively captured. The high pitched whine of the turbines and the blades chopping through the air. Even internally, the sound is captured well in the sense that it's as if you're wearing a flight helmet. Everything is a bit muffled, and all you can hear loudly is the turbine whine.

My motto when reviewing is to say, sounds are difficult to capture in words. But in just a few words, I don't think you'll be disappointed here.

#### **Performance:**

The ship ran relatively well on my machine, with very few stutters. At times performance could fall, but I would estimate this drop at no more than 25% of average frame rate. It never seemed to fall below 20 FPS from a solid average of around 26 FPS, which is quite nice for the detail you get.

#### **Summary:**

I did enjoy this review and loved looking at this ship. Flying the Blackhawk is great, if you are an avid fan of Military Aircraft, you can't miss this one. As I said, the aircraft's lines themselves are worth it, the sounds are above and beyond, and the VC does not disappoint. I will continue to enjoy flying this ship in the future.



### Test System

Intel Core 2 Duo  
4.0 Gb RAM  
512Mb FX 8800 GT OC  
300 GB HD  
FS 9.1

**Flying Time:**  
12 hours

### What I Like About The Blackhawk

- Beautiful modeling in every regard
- Excellent sounds
- Realistically animated main rotor

### What I Don't Like About The Blackhawk

- VC Radio clickability is a bit difficult at first

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