

Boeing Wraps Up Kiowa Contract

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After two years work, Boeing Australia has completed work on the Australian Army operational Kiowa fleet, refitting 35 out of the total fleet of 43 aircraft with a new Very High Frequency communication suite as well as a UHF/VHF Direction Finding System.

The last aircraft, belonging to 161 Reconnaissance Squadron based in Darwin, is now back in service following the eight day refit.

Major David Riordan, Office Commanding the 161, said the fleet of Kiowas, based on the commercial Bell Jet Ranger helicopter, is used by the Army "in a forward reconnaissance role, but doubles by participating in troop deployments all over the Northern Territory.

"Our deployment area is huge, ranging from Derby in Western Australia, to Broken Hill, New South Wales in the south, and Brisbane, Queensland, in the east," Riordan said.

"As a result, we need to know exactly where we are at any time, as the bush tends to become very similar at the heights we operate - normally in the 100 to 200 feet above ground range.

"This upgrade and improvement in communications and direction finding will improve our capabilities and represents a huge leap in communication standards," he said.

Boeing Project Manager of the Kiowa Communications Upgrade Project, Peter Ewart-Brown, said the handover of the last Army Kiowa back to 161 Squadron represented a very important milestone for Boeing Australia.

"We have been working towards this day for some time, and it is only now, on reflection, that we can actually see the size of the project," Ewart-Brown said. "It is a credit to the Boeing team, often working under trying conditions, who made all this possible."

The only remaining operational Kiowa aircraft to be modified belong to the Australian Navy and are based at Nowra in New South Wales. Work on these aircraft and remaining Army reserve aircraft has already begun and will be completed before Christmas.

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