Work Begins on First Netherlands AH-64D Apache; Production Rates to Pass Three-a-Month in January

Full-scale production of the first AH-64D Apache multi-mission combat helicopter for The Royal Netherlands Air Force is under way at the Boeing facility here.

While work is just getting started on the new Royal Netherlands AH-64D, The Boeing Company has been working since early 1997 remanufacturing existing U.S. Army AH-64A Apaches into the advanced AH-64D configuration. The production rate for the Army jumps from two to three aircraft a month in January.

The U.S. Army has ordered 232 Apache Longbow aircraft and plans to remanufacture its entire 758-helicopter AH-64A fleet through the first decade of the 21st century.

In all, Boeing will produce 30 new AH-64Ds for the Royal Netherlands Air Force over the next several years, and 67 new AH-64Ds for Great Britain as a teammate to GKN Westland Helicopters Ltd. Several other international defense forces have expressed interest in the AH-64D.

The Royal Netherlands Air Force will accept its first two AH-64Ds in April 1998. Its 302 Squadron, which will be formed at Gilze-Rijen Airbase in The Netherlands with 15 AH-64D Apaches, will be operational around the turn of the century.

While waiting for its AH-64Ds, Royal Netherlands Air Force pilots have been flying 12 AH-64A Apaches leased from the U.S. Army.

The AH-64A Apaches are flown by members of the 301 Squadron of the Royal Netherlands Air Force, which completed comprehensive U.S. Army training last year at Fort Hood, Texas, and became operational in September 1997. The 301 Squadron, which will become the second of two AH-64D Apache squadrons for the Royal Netherlands Air Force, will continue to fly AH-64As during the transition. The unit will become fully operational in 2003.

The AH-64D Apache is the next-generation version of the combat-proven AH-64A Apache, which is in service by defense forces around the world.

The advanced, multi-mission AH-64D features fully integrated avionics and weapons plus a state-of-the-art modem that transmits real-time, secure digitized battlefield information to a wide range of air and ground forces. The AH-64D incorporates a series of enhancements that make it more survivable, deployable and maintainable in the field.

Its ability to communicate digitally with other aircraft and ground forces, and to share that information almost instantly, gives the AH-64D a significant advantage over current combat helicopters and will enable it to dominate the 21st century battlefield.

Boeing had delivered 16 AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopters to the U.S. Army through November.

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