U.S. Army Demonstrates Capability to Load, Transport six AH-64D Apache Longbow Helicopters in C-5A Aircraft

Six production AH-64D Apache Longbow combat helicopters were loaded into a C-5A transport aircraft by the U.S. Army and flown to Ft. Hood, Texas, last week. The mission demonstrated the Army's ability to rapidly deploy large numbers of the next-generation aircraft.

The Army completed the "dense-pack" demonstration at Williams Gateway Airport, just south of The Boeing Company facility in Mesa, Ariz., where the Apache Longbows were produced. Boeing is producing AH-64Ds at a rate of three a month for the Army and producing new aircraft for a growing number of international customers.

The C-5A later flew to Ft. Hood where the Apache Longbows were unloaded and transferred to members of the 21st Cavalry Brigade who will conduct combat training and certification of the first Apache Longbow unit, the 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. The 1-227th is scheduled to be certified combat-ready in October.

It took approximately two hours for the Army to prepare each of the six aircraft for loading. In all, 12 soldiers partially disassembled the Apache Longbow helicopters before carefully guiding them into the giant cargo aircraft. Soldiers removed the Longbow Fire Control Radar dome, main rotor blades and some antennas.

"It all went like clockwork," said Bill Gann, mission director from the Army's Test and Experimentation Command based at Ft. Hood, who evaluated the loading and unloading demonstration. "We've clearly shown that we have the capability to rapidly deploy the Apache Longbows to meet an urgent need for battlefield firepower anywhere in the world."

The AH-64D Apache Longbow 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 Apache Longbow 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 Apache Longbow incorporates a series of enhancements that make it more effective in combat, and 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.

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