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The Boeing Company today rolled out the first production WAH-64D Apache Longbow multi-mission combat helicopter for the United Kingdom two days ahead of schedule in a ceremony at the company's Mesa, Ariz., rotorcraft center.

The WAH-64 Apache was delivered to prime contractor GKN Westland Helicopters Ltd., of Yeovil, England. GKN Westland is the first customer to acquire Apaches under a commercial contract. Following a comprehensive test and evaluation program, GKN Westland will deliver its first WAH-64 to the British Ministry of Defence in early 2000.

Today's rollout came only three days after the WAH-64 Apache made its first flight on Friday, Sept. 25, in Mesa.

The British Army will be the first defense force to field an all-Longbow-equipped Apache fleet, and the first to field Apaches powered by Rolls-Royce-Turbomeca RTM322 engines.

The aircraft is the first of 67 WAH-64 helicopters that will be delivered by GKN Westland through 2003.

Key government and military officials from the United Kingdom and the United States attended the ceremony. Keynote speaker was Richard I. Case, chief executive of GKN Westland Helicopters, Ltd.

"The success of this program has been made possible by the excellent people from all the companies on both sides of the Atlantic who work together as a single team," Case told attendees. "I would like to take this opportunity of thanking in particular those involved from Lockheed Martin, Boeing and GKN Westland Helicopters who are delivering this key project both on time and on budget.

"The successful teamwork demonstrated to date serves as a reminder that the complete team offers unrivaled strength in project management and experience in delivering the world's most advanced attack helicopter to the British Army."

"Our partnership with GKN Westland on the Apache Longbow will have a major economic impact on companies in the United States and the United Kingdom," said Mike Sears, president of Military Aircraft and Missile Systems at The Boeing Company. "This is a great program for GKN Westland, for Boeing and the U.K. government."

As a subcontractor to GKN Westland, Boeing is building eight aircraft and will partially assemble the remaining 59 WAH-64 Apache aircraft at its Mesa facility. Final assembly, flight test, delivery and support for these aircraft will take place at GKN Westland's Yeovil facility.

In addition to Boeing, major subcontractors on the program include Rolls-Royce-Turbomeca, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman.

Boeing also is building 232 AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopters for the U.S. Army over the next four years, and several other international defense forces have expressed interest in the AH-64D.

The WAH-64 Apache is a derivative of the U.S. Army's AH-64D Apache Longbow, the next-generation version of the combat-proven AH-64A Apache. The WAH-64 incorporates a series of enhancements that make it more effective in combat, and more survivable, deployable and maintainable in the field. The WAH-64's fire control radar and advanced avionics suite give combat pilots the ability to rapidly detect, classify, prioritize and engage stationary or moving enemy targets at standoff ranges in nearly all weather environments.

The WAH-64's ability to communicate digitally with other aircraft and ground forces, and to share that information almost instantly, also gives it a significant warfighting advantage over current combat helicopters.

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