Comanche Prototype No. 1 is Back in the Air

The Boeing Sikorsky RAH-66 Comanche is back in the South Florida sky after a comprehensive inspection and installation of various system improvements.

Prototype No. 1 took to the air on Oct. 24, accumulating one hour of flight time. The aircraft is being flown to evaluate flight and system performances following its 100-hour inspection. The inspection and refit period began in July.

Flight tests at the Comanche Team's Development Flight Center in West Palm Beach will assess the recent modifications. The Comanche then will receive new coordinated software -- for flight controls, the mission equipment package and the engine control unit. It will be the first major, new software addition in about a year. An expanded flight regime will follow, involving higher load factors, a new main rotor pylon shape and development of a weapon door-open flight envelope.

"The Comanche flight test program continues on a very successful path," said Art Linden, Comanche Joint Program Office director. "Equally successful is the system development work at the Comanche Team companies and our labs."

The Comanche Prototype No. 2, meanwhile, is approaching electrical power-on and will make its first flight in March 1999.

The RAH-66 Comanche, the U.S. Army's 21st century combat helicopter, is being developed by U.S. Army Aviation and a team of leading aerospace companies headed by Boeing and Sikorsky Aircraft Corp., a subsidiary of United Technologies Corp.

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