First U.S. Army Unit Equipped With Boeing AH-64D Apache Longbows Earns Combat Certification

With eight months of collective training under their belts, and a unique perspective on how to fight on the digital battlefield of the future, members of the first U.S. Army AH-64D Apache Longbow combat battalion have been certified as combat ready.

Members of the 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, now will await their first field assignment with their Apache Longbows, the world's only fourth-generation combat helicopter.

The certification for the 1-227th follows individual pilot and maintenance training at The Boeing Company in Mesa, Ariz., over the past 15 months, and eight months of intensive company-level and battalion-level training and evaluation that ended this month at Fort Hood, Texas. The 1-227th belongs to the 1st Cavalry Division, which is based at Fort Hood, Texas.

"Apache Longbow offers a whole new way of fighting," said Lt. Col. Michael Riley, commander of the 1-227th, who guided the battalion through the training process. "We're rewriting the Army's tactics, techniques and procedures every day we go into the field."

For example, where AH-64A Apache crews flew and fought side-by-side, new digital avionics give Apache Longbow crews greater situational awareness, allowing them to operate out of each other's view. Cockpit displays simplify the task by displaying the relative location of each helicopter on the mission.

To qualify as the U.S. Army's first combat-ready Apache Longbow unit, the men and women of the 1-227th completed a series of comprehensive classroom, flight and field exercises.

Each Apache Longbow unit uses its Apache Longbow aircraft for all attack and reconnaissance duties.

Members of the unit completed a rigorous field examination, which included four live fire exercises and more than 2,500 flight hours over the eight-month collective training program. The 1-227th received its combat readiness certificates in a ceremony this month at Fort Hood.

The U.S. Army is upgrading its AH-64A Apache fleet to the next-generation AH-64D Apache Longbow over the next decade. Boeing is under a five-year contract to produce 232 AH-64Ds through 2002. The company had delivered 48 Apache Longbows through Oct. 31 and is scheduled to deliver three more this month.

The 1-227th was trained by members of the 21st Cavalry Brigade, the Army's only aviation organization that trains combat aviation units to fight as a unit.

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, built by The Boeing Company in Mesa, Ariz., 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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