Boeing to Begin Training First International AH-64D Apache Pilots and Maintenance Crews

AH-64A Apache pilots and maintainers from the Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAF) are ready to transition to the AH-64D Apache, the world's most advanced multi-mission combat helicopter.

The training program at The Boeing Company in Mesa, Ariz., marks the first time international pilots and maintainers will be trained on the next-generation AH-64D. Maintainers began their classes this week while pilots are scheduled to start training Jan. 25.

The classes at Boeing include the first six pilots and seven maintainers from the RNLAF's 302 Squadron.

Boeing, the prime contractor on the AH-64D Apache, will provide individual pilot and maintenance training for The Netherlands, which has purchased 30 AH-64Ds. Over the next two years, 68 pilots and maintenance personnel from The Netherlands will be trained in Arizona.

After completing two months of classroom and flight training at Boeing, the pilots will move to Fort Hood, Texas, where they will become the first international defense force to undergo AH-64D collective training under the guidance of the U.S. Army's 21st Cavalry Brigade.

The Royal Netherlands Air Force will assign its first 15 AH-64Ds to its 302 Squadron at Gilze-Rijen Airbase in The Netherlands. The squadron will be operational around the turn of the century.

In addition to a variety of defensive assignments in The Netherlands, the RNLAF will fly its AH-64Ds in support of NATO operations throughout Europe.

The RNLAF has 12 AH-64A Apaches on lease from the U.S. Army while Boeing produces the RNLAF's new AH-64Ds.

The AH-64As are being flown and maintained by members of the 301 Squadron, which completed comprehensive U.S. Army training in 1996 at Fort Hood, and became operational in September 1997.

The 301 Squadron, which will become the second of two AH-64D Apache squadrons for the RNLAF, will continue to fly AH-64As during the transition. This unit will become AH-64D operational in 2003.

Among the RNLAF pilots transitioning into the AH-64D is Lt. Col. Ron Hagemeijer, the 302 squadron commander and a member of the evaluation team that selected the AH-64D.

The Netherlands became the first international customer to take delivery of an AH-64D in May 1998. To date, four new RNLAF AH-64Ds have been delivered. A fifth AH-64D is scheduled to be delivered this month.

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 in combat, and easily deployable and maintainable in the field.

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