Boeing To Develop Electric Gun Turret For The AH-64D

An advanced electronic turret for the next-generation AH-64D Apache Longbow multirole combat helicopter is being developed by The Boeing Company to make the aircraft's 30mm gun more accurate.

The Boeing ordnance division, based in Mesa, Ariz., has signed a 2 1/2-year, $5 million contract with the U.S. Army to create a lighter weight, more compact turret expected to become standard equipment on the Apache Longbow by 2003. The contract is managed by the Army's Tank & Automotive Command Armament Research Development Engineering Center in New Jersey.

The new turret will be part of the 30mm M230 weapon system. Boeing produces the M230 cannon at its Mesa facility.

"The goal is to take the turret from hydraulic to electric operation, a change that will significantly improve pointing accuracy of the gun," said Tom Johnston, integrated product team leader. "The new turret also will be 10 percent lighter and require one instead of two electrical boxes in the aircraft, enabling the Apache to hold more fuel.

Boeing is working with HR Textron of California to produce the turret.

"We're going to start from scratch, with Textron doing the controls and Boeing developing and producing the rest," said Johnston. "We'll create a whole new turret structure and control system."

Boeing plans to produce a turret that also can be used on other Boeing rotorcraft products, including the V-22 Osprey and RAH-66 Comanche.

"The new turret is expected to enhance international sales since it will make the Apache more effective in combat," said Robert Glantz, manager of the turret program at Boeing.

Because of the digital enhancements to the Apache Longbow, the aircraft's 30mm weapon system is more accurate than the same system in the AH-64A. With the new turret, the system's lethality will increase tremendously, Glantz said.

The AH-64D Apache Longbow is the U.S. Army's next generation version of the combat-proven AH-64A attack helicopter. The AH-64A and AH-64D aircraft are in service with defense forces around the world.

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