First Two Boeing Apache Longbows Arrive at Fort Rucker

The first two Boeing AH-64D Apache Longbow multi-role combat helicopters arrived at Fort Rucker, Ala., signaling the debut of Apache Longbow pilot training here.

The arrival here at the home of Army Aviation was marked by a ceremony today on the 224th anniversary of the U.S. Army.

Pilot training, which had been successfully conducted at The Boeing Company in Mesa, Ariz., for the past two and a half years, is moving to Fort Rucker, where the Army has prepared helicopter pilots for the past five decades. Training is scheduled to begin in January.

Hundreds of Apache pilots have been trained over the past 15 years at Fort Rucker, where the Army maintains a dedicated fleet of AH-64As.

Eventually, most AH-64A Apaches will be replaced with AH-64Ds for instructor and pilot training. The U.S. Army plans to upgrade its Apache fleet into Apache Longbows, the world's only fourth-generation combat helicopters.

Apache Longbow maintenance courses, which also had been offered in Mesa, will soon transition to Fort Eustis, Va. Boeing is scheduled to complete training of maintainers for the Army's third Apache Longbow battalion in February 2000.

Boeing will continue to use its Mesa facility to prepare international Apache pilots and maintainers.

The first Apache Longbow battalion, the 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, was certified combat ready last year and the second battalion, the 2nd Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, is completing its advanced combat training at Fort Hood, Texas. In all, the U.S. Army completed 5,000 accident-free training hours in more than 5,200 sorties flown during the past 30 months.

By the end of 2,000, 208 U. S. Army pilots, 594 U.S. Army maintainers, 64 pilots from The Netherlands and 11 pilots from the United Kingdom will have completed training at the Boeing-Mesa training facility.

"The U.S. Army took advantage of our facility and qualified personnel and the availability of new aircraft in Mesa," said Rod Bither, program manger for Instructional and Technical Data Systems, Army Programs at the Boeing Company in Mesa. "Boeing will continue to support the Army training programs at Fort Rucker and Fort Eustis while continuing to offer our services to international customers for pilot and maintenance crews."

Bither added that international Apache customers have found the Boeing training center to be a "valuable resource" for transitioning AH-64A Apache-qualified pilots into the newer AH-64Ds. "We're seeing significant interest that suggests we'll be training international air and ground crews for many years to come," he said

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