First British Apache Longbow Pilots Complete Flight Training at Boeing

The first two Apache Longbow combat helicopter pilots from the United Kingdom have completed individual pilot training at The Boeing Company in Mesa, Ariz. The pilots trained in the WAH-64, which is the United Kingdom's version of the world's only fourth-generation combat helicopter, the AH-64D Apache Longbow, in production at Boeing in Mesa.

The two aviators, who graduated last week, are the first of 21 British Army Air Corps pilots to be trained by Boeing over the next nine months. They spent three months learning to fly the world's most advanced combat helicopter and completed their 40 hours of flight training in Apache Longbows. The Apache's demonstrated 100 percent availability throughout the training program.

An additional 200 British Army pilots will be trained in the United Kingdom by British pilots to support the 67 WAH-64 Apache Longbows the British Army has ordered from GKN Westland.

Dedicated operational and maintenance training centers are being created by a joint venture between Boeing and GKN Westland. That new company, Aviation Training International Ltd., will operate the state-of-the-art training centers under a $1 billion, 30-year contract from the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence.

Boeing will deliver eight complete aircraft to GKN Westland this year. Fuselages for the remaining 59 aircraft will be delivered to GKN Westland's U.K. production line for installation of U.S.- and U.K.-specific equipment including Rolls-Royce-Turbomeca RTM322 engines, final assembly and flight test.

Both Maj. Bloo Anderson, who will lead the first U.K. Apache unit, and Maj. Anthony Pring, who will head U.K. Apache simulation training efforts, were experienced helicopter pilots before beginning the conversion from the AH-64A to the WAH-64.

Following graduation, Anderson praised the Apache Longbow, calling it a "fabulous aircraft."

"Apache Longbow's capabilities far exceed our initial ability to use it," said Anderson, who has logged 1,000 flight hours in AH-64A Apaches. "We'll spend the next several years exploring its overall potential."

Anderson, who learned to fly the AH-64A while serving as an exchange officer with the U.S. Army, said the next-generation WAH-64 is to the AH-64A what the AH-64A was to the Vietnam-era Cobra.

"It's that dramatically better," he said.

Boeing also has trained four other British pilots - two from GKN Westland Helicopters Ltd., the prime contractor on the production program, and two pilots from Great Britain's Defence Evaluation and Research Agency. Boeing is a major subcontractor to GKN Westland for the WAH-64 program.

In addition to British pilots, Boeing has trained Apache Longbow pilots from the U.S. Army and the Royal Netherlands Air Force at its Mesa training center. Maintenance training classes also are ongoing for U.S. Army Apache Longbow crews.

With its advanced Longbow fire control radar, Apache Longbow crews can scan the battlefield in real time, classify and prioritize multiple threats, and digitally share this battlefield information with other AH-64Ds and other friendly forces.

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