Enhanced Boeing Apache Longbow Completes First Flight

The first U.S. Army AH-64D Apache Longbow combat helicopter equipped with initial enhancements that will be introduced during the second multiyear production program completed its first flight Thursday at The Boeing Company in Mesa, Ariz.

The pre-production Apache Longbow, which flew for 23 minutes, was equipped with numerous system updates that incorporate commercial off-the-shelf technologies to reduce costs and allow for future growth while extending product operational life. The enhancements also will provide a foundation to support the Army's emerging digitized battlefield requirements.

"This first flight is a significant milestone for the program," said Al Winn, vice president for Apache programs. "It not only marks the start of the second multiyear production effort for the U.S. Army for 269 aircraft, but it also drives home our belief that Apache will remain a potent and relevant weapon for our customers for decades to come."

Representatives of Apache team companies from around the world were on hand to witness this first flight.

"We are proud of our role in enhancing the features and capabilities of this superior product," said Martin Soltau, Apache program manager at Smiths Aerospace, United Kingdom. Smiths Aerospace UK produces the improved electrical power management system used in the Apache Longbow.

The first multiyear II helicopters - the sixth lot of U.S. Army Apache Longbows - will come off the production line in early 2002. Through 2006, the Army's fleet of AH-64D Apache Longbows will grow to 501 helicopters.

Next-generation Apache Longbows continue to make their presence known around the globe through a growing customer base that includes Egypt, Israel, Singapore, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Several international competitions also are under way.

In addition to the remanufacturing of 269 aircraft, the second multiyear contract includes maintenance and operator training devices, spare parts, logistics and support services.

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