Boeing Apache Longbow Lifts Off With New "Eyes"

Boeing [NYSE:BA] AH-64D Apache Longbow combat helicopter pilots soon will "see" farther and more clearly, thanks to a next-generation day-night sensor system.

Boeing began flight-testing at its Apache production facilities in Mesa, Ariz., on Lockheed Martin's upgrades for the U.S. Army's Modernized Target Acquisition and Designation Sight/Pilot Night Vision Sensor (M-TADS/PNVS) program following weeks of integration activity. The Army's M-TADS/PNVS project, under Team Apache Systems, is a joint Boeing and Lockheed Martin program.

The new sensors will give Apache pilots greater situational awareness and combat effectiveness. The upgraded system logged its first flight aboard an Apache Longbow in early November 2003.

The upgrade consists of advanced target acquisition/designation and night vision capabilities for U.S. Army Aviation using improved Arrowhead kits supplied by Lockheed Martin for the TADS/PNVS. The first Army unit equipped with Arrowhead kits will be fielded by June 2005.

The Arrowhead sensors represent a significant improvement over the current TADS/PNVS on all Apaches. The new sensors improve performance and reliability by more than 150 percent and reduce maintenance actions by nearly 60 percent.

The test program followed a government-industry agreement leading up to a $260 million U.S. government contract for Lot 1 Arrowhead deliveries.

The contract covers 19 Arrowhead units that will be field-retrofitted onto U.S. Army Apache Longbows starting in mid-2005, and installed on the final Apache Longbows being built under the current multi-year contract with the U.S. Army.

"Apache with the new M-TADS/PNVS gives the warfighter even greater capabilities," said Al Winn, vice president, Apache programs, for Boeing. "It's like the difference between day and night."

"Our focus has been to provide the Army Aviator with the most advanced technology available to enhance mission success," said Bob Gunning, Arrowhead program director at Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control. "Today's winners are the dedicated soldiers of the United States Army that will employ and maintain this system in the future."

The recent Lot 1 agreement also covers integration of the Arrowhead on Apache Longbows already in service in both the Block I and Block II configurations, and units for 36 Apache Longbows being built for international customers.

Ultimately, the U.S. Army plans to equip all of its AH-64Ds with Arrowhead, whose modular architecture makes it possible to field the system at the flight line using a field-retrofit kit. The new Arrowhead architecture incorporates Army-mandated horizontal technology integration (HTI) by using components, technology, and software to be used on future Army rotorcraft.

Boeing builds AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopters for the U.S. Army and several international defense forces. The Apache Longbow is also under consideration by numerous other defense forces around the world.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 130,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $25 billion business. It provides systems solutions to its global military, government and commercial customers. It is a leading provider of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems; the world's largest military aircraft manufacturer; the Lead Systems Integrator for the US Army's Future Combat System; the world's largest satellite manufacturer and a leading provider of space-based communications; the primary systems integrator for U.S. missile defense; NASA's largest contractor; and a global leader in launch services.

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