Boeing AH-64D Apache Block III Structures Test Aircraft Makes 1st Flight

MESA, Ariz., Dec. 4, 2009 -- The Boeing [NYSE: BA] AH-64D Apache Block III program has completed the first flight of its structures test aircraft. The test, conducted Nov. 23 in Mesa, demonstrated flight characteristics and handling maneuvers. Tests to continue to expand the helicopter's flight envelope are expected to continue for the next several weeks.

Block III technologies being tested include the composite main rotor blade, composite horizontal stabilator, and -701D engines, which include an enhanced digital electronic control unit. The aircraft also features a split-torque face gear transmission that increases power throughput by more than 20 percent within the same physical operating space as the legacy transmission.

"This flight demonstration is another crucial step as the U.S. Army and Boeing work together to meet the objectives of the Apache Block III program," said Col. Shane Openshaw, Army Apache project manager. "The Apache Block III helicopter meets the Army's requirement to sustain the aircraft for its life cycle while providing superior capabilities to Army aviators, battlefield commanders and soldiers."

The program's avionics test aircraft, which made its first flight ahead of schedule in June 2008, completed the Army's Limited User Test according to schedule, in November, at the Yuma (Ariz.) Proving Ground.

"Meeting calendar objectives while integrating new capabilities confirms the maturity of the multiple technologies conceived, designed and developed by Boeing and our key partners for the Apache Block III helicopter," said Al Winn, Boeing Apache Programs vice president. "Our success highlights the value of cooperative development."

The Army and Boeing continue to work toward an anticipated Department of Defense acquisition process Milestone C decision in April 2010.

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