Australian Army Takes First Delivery Of Aircraft Equipped With Lockheed Martin HELLFIRE II Missiles And M299 Launcher

The Australian Army has taken delivery of its first two Tiger armed reconnaissance helicopters (ARHs), equipped with Lockheed Martin's HELLFIRE II missiles and M299 "smart" launchers. The helicopters, manufactured by Eurocopter in France, were delivered by its subsidiary Australian Aerospace.

Lockheed Martin and Eurocopter successfully completed a series of launcher and platform integration tests, validating the laser-guided HELLFIRE II missile and the all-digital M299 launcher system interface with the European helicopter. This paves the way for the ARH to carry the HELLFIRE II family, and it also allows for potential use of the HELLFIRE on European versions of the Tiger to be flown in France, Spain and Germany.

The first two Tiger ARHs, equipped with the Lockheed Martin's HELLFIRE II missile and M299 launcher, were delivered to the Australian Army in December 2004 at a ceremony in Oakey, Australia. The Australian ARH Eurocopter Tiger is derived from the Franco-German Tiger variant. It is armed with 70-mm (2.75-inch) rockets, HELLFIRE II air-to-ground missiles and a turreted 30-mm gun, as well as an Australia-specific communications and data transmission system.

"Armed with the HELLFIRE II missile and M299 launcher, the Tiger will be a formidable, lethal deterrent against aggression," said Mark Stenger, director of Air-to-Ground Missile Systems at Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control in Orlando. "In Afghanistan and Iraq, HELLFIRE not only proved to be superior against buildings, but was also extremely effective against ships, light armor and urban targets."

The HELLFIRE system will complete qualification on the Australian Tiger ARH-1, with live missile firings currently scheduled for April through September. Upon successful completion of these tests, the HELLFIRE System on the ARH will be deemed fully qualified and cleared for use in operational missions.

"The M299 launcher gives the Australian ARH and other attack helicopters the ability to engage a wide range of targets in a single sortie," continued Stenger. "The M299 guided missile launcher, an integral part of the HELLFIRE II missile system, is capable of launching any mix of HELLFIRE II and Longbow HELLFIRE missiles. The 'smart' launcher can be integrated with multiple platforms, and its digital design minimizes system weight, complexity, power usage and support requirements."

HELLFIRE II missiles have been used in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), with more than 650 rounds fired to date. At one point, the Lockheed Martin HELLFIRE team was asked to accelerate delivery of additional rounds to support the war effort.

With more than 18,000 rounds produced for the U.S. and 14 international customers, HELLFIRE has been successfully integrated with every leading attack helicopter in the U.S. and many Allied fleets. It is approved for international sales both through the foreign military sales system and direct commercial sales.

The HELLFIRE II missile is produced at Lockheed Martin's award-winning manufacturing plants in Ocala, FL (seeker electronics), and Troy, AL (missile final assembly).

Lockheed Martin also supplies the U.S. Army and international customers with the M299 launcher. The launcher airframe is provided by Marvin Engineering of Inglewood, CA, as a subcontractor to Lockheed Martin. The launcher electronics unit, which can easily adapt the launcher to interface with multiple rotary-wing platforms, is provided by Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control in Orlando, FL, with production of electronic components in Ocala, FL.

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.

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