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Army's Apache Helicopters Near Delivery, Replacing Tigers

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The Australian Army's first four AH-64E Apache attack helicopters are in final assembly, marking a significant upgrade as they prepare to replace the outdated Tiger Armed Reconnaissance Helicopters.

The Australian Army is on the cusp of a major leap in its aviation capabilities, with the first four AH-64E Apache attack helicopters advancing through final assembly and production, as announced by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) on July 30, 2025. These state-of-the-art helicopters, manufactured by Boeing, will progressively replace the aging Tiger Armed

Reconnaissance Helicopters (ARH), which have faced criticism for high maintenance costs and operational limitations, according to a 2023 Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) report. The Apaches, equipped with advanced sensors and Hellfire missiles, promise enhanced lethality and survivability for modern battlefields.

The acquisition, part of a \$3.8 billion deal for 29 AH-64E Apaches under the LAND 4503 program, reflects Australia's push to modernize its defense forces amid growing regional tensions. The helicopters, featuring a 30mm M230 chain gun and Longbow radar, can track up to 128 targets simultaneously, offering superior close air support, as noted by Boeing's official specifications. Deputy Chief of Army, Major General Richard Vagg, emphasized their strategic value, stating to Defence Connect that the Apaches will "deliver unmatched firepower and interoperability with our allies." The first deliveries are expected by early 2026, with full operational capability targeted for 2028, per the Department of Defence.

The transition from the Tiger ARH, which entered service in 2004, addresses long-standing issues. The ANAO reported in 2023 that the Tiger fleet struggled with a 60% availability rate and costs exceeding \$1.5 billion in sustainment. The Apaches, with their Modular Open Systems Architecture (MOSA), allow for rapid integration of new technologies, ensuring longevity through the 2060s, according to Boeing. Training for pilots and ground crews is underway at Oakey Army Aviation Centre, with support from the United States Army's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program.

The opposition has raised concerns about delays in the program, originally slated for 2025 delivery, citing supply chain issues noted by Defence Industry Minister Pat Conroy in a July 2025 statement to The Australian. Nonetheless, the ADF remains committed to bolstering its attack aviation, enhancing deterrence in a volatile Indo-Pacific region.