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Part of a new 20-helicopter squadron. The Apache Longbow Apache helicopter (Photo: IDF Spokesman's Office)

IDF gets world's best choppers

Three Apache Longbow helicopters arrive in part of USD 640 million defense-upgrade project. The remaining choppers to arrive by the end of 2006.

By Ynetnews
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TEL AVIV - The Israeli Air Force (IAF) received three Apache Longbow helicopters Sunday as part of a newly-established 20-helicopter squadron.

The highly advanced chopper can fly in all weather conditions and at nighttime, as it comes equipped with a night-vision system that transfers images directly to the pilot's eyes, a senior IAF officer said.

Another major advantage of the chopper pertains to its radar, which permits the detection of more than one target at a time and enables the pilot to launch a missile without maintaining eye-contact with the target, he said.

"This technique, which is called 'Launch and Forget,' offers us an efficient way to deal with the current risks helicopters face - from Kalashnikov gunfire, to anti-tank missiles and anti-aircraft fire," the officer said.

"The cockpit is a story in itself. Each activity or malfunction on the helicopter appears on the screen," another IAF officer said. "Everything is very user-friendly."

Each helicopter cost an estimated USD 27 million, and all in all Israel has invested some USD 640 million in the project, including the upgrading of Israeli-manufactured choppers and infrastructure development.

'We must prepare for any situation'

The remaining Apaches are expected to arrive in the country by the end of 2006 as part of a deal that was struck five years ago between the Defense Ministry and a number of American

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companies, including Boeing.

"This is a helicopter that brings unique capabilities to a long list of (military) operational aspects," an IDF official said.

Upon the establishment of the new IAF squadron, a number of Apache helicopter squadron pilots were sent to the U.S. to study the advanced helicopter.

Despite the recent positive developments in the Middle East, the IAF is certain the acquisition of the Apache Longbows is a necessity.

"We must prepare for any situation, including a 'classic' war," an IAF officer said.



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