

Media Release MIN 409/01 issued on 8th October 2001 by The Hon. Peter Reith, MP, Minister for Defence

ARMED RECONNAISSANCE HELICOPTERS

The production in Queensland of the Army's Armed Reconnaissance Helicopters ('Tiger ARH') has moved a step closer with the opening of Australian Aerospace's new headquarters at Brisbane airport.

Australian Aerospace, which employs 135 people, is a subsidiary of the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS) and will assemble the Armed Reconnaissance helicopters for Eurocopter (also an EADS subsidiary).

Eurocopter was chosen in August as the only company to proceed to the tender development stage for the new helicopters.

When the contract for the 22 helicopters is finalised it will be worth about \$1.3 billion dollars.

The first few helicopters will be assembled by Australian technicians in France. While the final assembly site in Australia has not yet been confirmed locations at Oakey and Brisbane are being examined.

Up to 150 new jobs will be created when the helicopter work is underway between mid 2004 and mid 2006.

Australian Aerospace currently provides deeper level maintenance of the P3 Orion and Caribou aircraft for the Royal Australian Air Force at Richmond, NSW and Brisbane.

Partnerships such as this, between Australian industry and international defence companies, play a vital role in sustaining critical defence industry capabilities and supporting a technologically advanced Australian Defence Force.

The Armed Reconnaissance Helicopters project will give Australia a new level of industry capability for the maintenance and support of leading edge technology.

Importantly, some of the components produced in Australia will be exported and thus give Australia entry to the worldwide supply chain for Eurocopter.

The first of the armed reconnaissance helicopters are scheduled to enter service by the end of 2004.

The 'Tiger ARH' will be equipped with leading edge technology in its sensors, data links and communications and provide a major new capability for Army.

The helicopters' flexibility, ability to deploy at short notice and ability to operate in diverse circumstances represents a revolution in the Australian Army's operational versatility.

The Army will be able to conduct tactical reconnaissance by day or night and escort and protect our Black Hawk helicopters as they transport troops and supplies.

As part of the requirement to fulfil Australian industry involvement targets in the Air 87 Project, Eurocopter will also be establishing a second production line to produce EC120 civilian helicopters in Australia.

Eurocopter has proposed this production line be established in Queensland. It will produce between 30 - 50 helicopters each year for the Australian, New Zealand and Asian markets.

This production line will have a turnover of about \$50 million dollars each year and employ about 30 people over and above those needed for the "Tiger ARH".

Further information:

Ministerial: Ross Hampton 0419 484 095
Australian Aerospace: Ted Porter 0418 468 269
Department: Tim Bloomfield (02) 6265 1807