

Eurocopter Press releases & news 2004
Maiden Flight of the Australian ARH Tiger
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The first Tiger production helicopter ARH (Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter) version, for Australia, performed its maiden flight at Eurocopter's Marignane plant on 20 February 2004. This 50 minute flight gave the flight test pilot, Jacques Larra, and the flight test engineer, Bernard Janssonie, the opportunity to check that all systems were operating correctly and to check out the complete flight envelope.

Following this maiden flight, which took place in accordance with the planned schedule, this aircraft will start the qualification flight test program that will validate the delivery of the first two ARH Tigers to the Australian Army Aviation Corps at the end of 2004 and demonstrate readiness for service.

The development flight test program began in July 2003 thanks to the availability and adaptation of a Franco-German Tiger prototype.

The Australian ARH version of the Tiger is derived from the Franco-German Tiger variant. It is armed with 70 mm rockets and Hellfire II air-ground missiles on its four hardpoints, as well as an Australian specific communications and data transmission system.

Australia chose the Eurocopter Tiger in August 2001 following an invitation to bid that involved stiff competition from Bell's Cobra, Boeing's Apache, and Agusta's Mangusta helicopter. Following exclusive negotiations, the Commonwealth of Australia and Eurocopter signed two major contracts in December 2001 for:

- The Acquisition of the ARH Tiger system
- The Through Life Support of this system over 15 years from its entry into service (2005 to 2020).

The contracts were concluded with the Eurocopter subsidiary, Australian Aerospace, as the prime contractor. In accordance with the Acquisition contract, the Eurocopter group ensures the development of the ARH version of the Tiger and the manufacture of 22 Tigers, 18 of which will be assembled in Australia.

In addition to the Tiger that has just performed its maiden flight, two aircraft are already on the assembly line in Marignane and three are on the Australian Aerospace assembly line in Brisbane, Queensland.

This contract also includes the development and manufacture of training means (flight simulator, trainer and training courses), mission preparation devices, and maintenance and logistic support provisions.

Following the entry into service, Australian Aerospace will also perform fleet management and maintenance as well as crew training.

The next key steps are:

- December 2004 Delivery of 2 first ARH Tigers and demonstration of entry into service

- January 2005 Crew training begins in Australia
- March 2005 Preliminary (military) certification of ARH Tiger
- March 2006 Final (military) certification of ARH Tiger
- June 2007 1st squadron operational in Darwin (North Australia)
- April 2008 Delivery phase ends

For the acquisition & support phases, Australian Aerospace has involved a large number of Australian major sub-contractors and SME's.

80 UHT versions of the Tiger helicopter have already been ordered by Germany, 80 HAP/HAD Tigers have been ordered by France and 24 HAD Tigers have been chosen by Spain.

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