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ALWAYS READY ALWAYS THERE

IDAHO ARMY NATIONAL GUARD BIDS FINAL FAREWELL TO APACHE HELICOPTERS

BY IDNG PUBLIC AFFAIRS

GOWEN FIELD, ID – Hundreds gathered at Gowen Field to bid a final farewell to the Idaho Army National Guard's AH-64 Apache Helicopters on July 21. During the ceremony, the final five Apaches from the 183rd Aviation Battalion, departed Gowen Field, flew a loop around the Idaho state capital building and headed for Utah as part of the U.S. Army's Aviation Restructuring Initiative.

Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter, along with former unit commanders and Idaho National Guard leadership attended the farewell event .

Maj. Chris O'Leary with the Idaho National Guard 183rd Aviation Battalion flew the Apache helicopters for more than 12 years and says he will miss them.

"I joined the Army to fly Apaches, so it's definitely bittersweet," O'Leary said. "But that being said, we are excited for what we get to do here pretty soon."

The IDARNG operated the Apache, an attack helicopter, for more 20 years and bid farewell to a total 15 aircraft.

The battalion will transition to an air assault helicopter with its newly assigned UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. Currently, the IDARNG has nearly two dozen Black Hawkes in its inventory but expects more. Although highly capable of performing combat missions, the Black Hawk is ideally suited to perform the Idaho National Guard's state mission: responding to state and local emergencies.

"The good news for all of this is it will really enhance our state missions, that aspect of our job as the National Guard to respond to state emergencies and disasters," said Maj. Chris

Borders, Idaho National Guard Public Affairs Officer.

UH-60s have the capability to hoist personnel into and out of affected danger areas, they can conduct water picks during firefighting operations, and they have significant transport capabilities, to transport injured personnel, supplies, and equipment.

Over the next year, pilots and maintainers will undergo transition courses as well. This will allow our personnel to cross train from Apache operations and maintenance to Black Hawk operations and maintenance.

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