



# Italian Heart and American Muscle: Successful Evaluation of the MH-139A Grey Wolf Completed

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The **United States Air Force (USAF)** has announced the **successful completion of the operational evaluation phase** of the new multirole helicopter **MH-139A Grey Wolf**, marking a crucial step towards its full integration into the strategic security missions of American defense.

The **Grey Wolf**, developed by **Boeing** based on the **Leonardo AW139**, has successfully passed the **Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (IOT&E)** phase, a mandatory step for all new military platforms purchased by the Pentagon, imposed by the United States Congress to verify their suitability before operational deployment.

## A six-month test in the skies of Montana

For six months, the **582nd Helicopter Group** of Warren Air Force Base (Montana) conducted a series of intensive tests, analyzing the capabilities of the Grey Wolf in critical scenarios, including **rapid response in emergency situations** and **escort and convoy protection missions**, with particular attention to the **security of intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) silos**, one of the most sensitive tasks of US defense.

The tests included three key missions: a simulation of **escort for ground convoys** and two flights dedicated to **responding to threats against nuclear installations**, with exercises for recovering sites under attack. The results confirmed the Grey Wolf's ability to **rapidly deploy tactical security units** and effectively coordinate with ground troops thanks to sophisticated communication systems.

## From Italy to the United States: a winning synergy

The **MH-139A** is born from a **transatlantic collaboration**: while the base is the proven **AW139** helicopter produced by **Leonardo**, its military version is the result of **Boeing's customization**, which has integrated strategic components such as advanced weather radar, missile warning systems, ballistic protections, and an open-architecture “glass cockpit.” Additionally, it can be equipped with **7.62 mm M240 machine guns**, increasing its tactical versatility.

Compared to the civilian model, the **Grey Wolf is 50% faster**, has **greater range**, a **cabin 30% larger**, and an **increased payload capacity of over 2,260 kg**. All this makes it a worthy replacement for the historic **Bell UH-1N Huey**, in service since the 1970s.

## A 2 billion euro program

The contract between Boeing and USAF, signed on **September 24, 2018**, has a total value of **2 billion euros**, with an initial batch of **13 helicopters for 245 million**. The production of the AW139s destined for transformation into MH-139 takes place largely at the **Leonardo plant in Philadelphia**, testifying to the central role of the Italian industry in Western defense.

## Towards operational deployment

The first operational Grey Wolf was assigned on **March 5, 2024, to Malmstrom Base (Montana)**. With the positive closure of the IOT&E phase, the USAF will prepare an **official**

**report for the Air Force Global Strike Command** and the **Congressional Armed Services Committee**, which will certify its final adoption.

The entry into service of the MH-139A thus marks **the beginning of the gradual phasing out of the old UH-1Ns**, and represents an important milestone in the **modernization of deterrence and rapid response capabilities** of the US forces.