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EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif., Aug. 6, 2009-- Boeing [NYSE: BA] on Aug. 5 delivered to the U.S. Air Force a B-52 Stratofortress upgraded with Combat Network Communications Technology (CONNECT), a modification that equips the B-52 with 21st century situational awareness and mission flexibility. The upgraded systems will be tested and verified during flight tests at Edwards Air Force Base.

"CONNECT brings the B-52 into the network-centric battlefield, where it can connect with other platforms in the fight," said Jim Kroening, Boeing B-52 Network Centric Operations program manager. "Adding a digital backbone to this aircraft is critical to maintaining it as a viable, ready and reliable platform for many years to come."

The CONNECT modification installs a digital communications infrastructure on the B-52 that allows the aircraft to communicate with the Air Force's digital communications network and tie in with Air Force command-and-control centers, ground forces and other platforms. One major upgrade is the aircraft's new ability to receive updated mission information and re-tasking data while in flight.

"A lot can change from the time the B-52 takes off for its mission to when it arrives in theater," said Kroening. "By tapping into the Air Force's digital network, the B-52 can send and receive real-time, updated information."

This first B-52 CONNECT aircraft made its initial flight from the Boeing facility in Wichita, Kan., in May after a 21-month modification. After the flight test program is complete, all 76 aircraft in the Air Force fleet will receive the CONNECT upgrade.

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