Boeing Authorized To Begin Production Of E-3 Awacs Radar Improvements

The Boeing Company has been authorized by the U.S. Air Force, NATO, and the United Kingdom to begin production of radar enhancements to their fleets of E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft.

Valued at $482 million, the production program is the latest step under the Radar System Improvement Program (RSIP), a multinational cooperative effort.

RSIP will improve the E-3's radar by increasing the sensitivity of the pulse Doppler radar so the aircraft can detect and track smaller stealthy targets over a longer range. It also will improve the radar's electronics counter-countermeasures capability - making it harder to jam the system - and will upgrade the radar's existing computer with a new high-reliability multi-processor and rewrite the software to make it easier to maintain and enhance in the future.

"This past year has been spent testing the system's readiness for production, and it's exciting to finally be moving forward," said Garry Porter, Boeing NATO AWACS program manager. "Retrofitting these aircraft goes a long way toward maintaining the E-3's overall edge."

Under the initial production contract, Boeing and its subcontractor, Northrop Grumman (formerly Westinghouse), will build 18 modification kits for NATO, four for the Air Force and eight for the United Kingdom. The first of three additional follow-on options for the U.S. AWACS fleet has been exercised. The options ultimately will provide kits for 11 of the aircraft.

The production program also will involve several European and Canadian firms, including OGMA Industria Aeronautica of Portugal; TERMA Elektronik of Denmark; LOGIC of Italy; Advanced Technology Applications of Greece; TUSAS Aerospace Industries, Inc. of Turkey; and Litton Systems Canada, Ltd., SPAR Applied Systems and Computing Devices Canada of Canada.

RSIP kits will be installed by Air Force personnel at Tinker Air Base, Okla. Daimler-Benz (Dasa) will handle retrofit for NATO and British Aerospace will retrofit the U.K. AWACS aircraft.

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