Air Force Awards Contract To Boeing For B-1B Lancer Bomber Upgrades

The U.S. Air Force has awarded Boeing a $179 million contract to upgrade offensive avionics computers and software, and install additional weapons delivery capability on B-1B Lancer bombers as part of the B-1B Conventional Mission Upgrade Program (CMUP).

The effort is part of a B-1B/CMUP upgrade known as Block E. The improvements will enhance the U.S. Air Force Air Combat Command bomber's lethality, survivability and supportability.

Work on the upgrades is being done by Boeing facilities in Seal Beach, Palmdale and Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.; Seattle, Wash.; and Oklahoma City, Okla., under the direction of the U.S. Air Force Aeronautical Systems Center, Dayton, Ohio. The award covers EMD, or the engineering/ manufacturing development phase, of the Block E upgrade and calls for development and testing of new avionics computers and associated software and equipment, as well as correction of deficiencies in offensive radar software. Improvements to the B-1B's computer hardware and software will enhance the U.S. Air Force Air Combat Command bomber's capability to deliver more weapons on target with greater accuracy.

Four new computers on each aircraft will replace six existing ones, and will provide a 25-fold increase in throughput, memory and input/output margins required for conventional weapons capability, defensive systems upgrades, and future growth. Block E upgrades also include modifications to the bomber's 10-carry weapons module that will enable it to deploy wind-corrected cluster bombs and other smart weapons.

The EMD phase is scheduled to conclude in the year 2001, after completion of flight tests of new Block E systems installed on two B-1Bs. Production and installation of the improvements for the 95-aircraft B-1B fleet is planned to begin in 2001. Block E upgrades are part of a larger Air Force effort to optimize the B-1B for conventional warfare.

Major subcontractors to Boeing for Block E include Lockheed Martin Federal Systems Division, which will provide avionics computers; the Fairchild Defense Division of Orbital Science Corporation, which will provide data transfer devices; and Northrop Grumman's Electronic Sensors and Systems Divison, which will provide correction of software deficiencies for the offensive radar system.

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