U.S. Air Force And Boeing Roll Out Flight Test Vehicle

The U.S. Air Force Phillips Laboratory and Boeing rolled out the first-phase flight test vehicle for the Air Force Space Maneuver Vehicle (SMV) program in ceremonies here today.

Boeing and its subcontractor team designed and built the SMV in the company's Seal Beach facility. The 22-foot-long vehicle with its 12-foot wing span is a 90-percent-scale version of later-generation unpiloted space maneuver vehicles.

The vehicle rolled out today will be the first to be flight-tested to demonstrate SMV autonomous approach and landing capability. In the long term, the Air Force Military Spaceplane program will feature small, unpiloted, powered SMV vehicles functioning as reusable satellites to carry out space missions such as tactical reconnaissance and space object idenfication and surveillance.

John A. McLuckey, president of the Boeing Space Systems business unit, told the audience at the rollout: "We're pleased with how far we have come in a short time to reach today's important milestone; we're excited that flight testing of our vehicle is about to begin; and we're proud to be playing a number of key roles as we work with the Air Force to develop 21st-century military space capabilties."

The phase one space maneuver vehicle that the Air Force and Boeing rolled out today will pave the way for next-generation SMV vehicles. Later this month, Boeing will ship the vehicle to Holloman Air Force Base, N.M., for a series of flight tests. In November, the vehicle will be towed aloft by a helicopter and released into unpowered flight from approximately 10,000-feet altitude to demonstrate autonomous high-speed guidance, navigation and control in the approach and landing phase.

This Boeing project is under the direction of two organizations working in partnership on SMV development for 21st-century military space roles: the Military Spaceplane Program Office of Phillips Laboratory at Kirtland Air Force Base, N.M.; and the U.S. Air Force Wright Laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

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