

Boeing Receives Contract To Upgrade NATO AWACS Fleet

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Boeing has received a contract worth approximately \$450 million to develop and test a mission systems upgrade for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) fleet of 17 E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft.

The contract was awarded by the Electronic Systems Center, Hanscom Air Force Base, Mass., acting as agent for the NATO Airborne Early Warning Programme Management Agency (NAPMA) in Brunssum, Netherlands.

Under the NATO Mid-Term engineering, manufacturing and development (EMD) contract, which runs through 2001, Boeing -- supported by subcontractors from participating NATO nations -- will integrate major system-related enhancements to computers, displays, communications, navigation and target identification. Retrofit of the entire AWACS fleet will be implemented during a follow-on contract.

The enhancements include:

- State-of-the-art flat panel situation displays with a Windows-like environment to support the interaction between operators and sensor systems, increasing the operator's situational awareness. Multi-Sensor Integration will merge all information about a specific target into a single computer track -- which shows a target's direction and speed -- improving the reliability and accuracy of the tracking process and target identification.
- Replacing the mission computing system with an open system architecture, which will support cost-effective, future insertion of upgraded commercial hardware and software.
- Installing digital communications systems to improve crew access to available radio links and provide automatic record and replay of all communication and display data. Satellite communications will be integrated into the mission system offering a wider range of improved over-the-horizon communication via satellite links.
- Adding broad-spectrum VHF radios that will support increased operations with Eastern European nations' air and ground forces. Improved identification capability will provide compatibility with emerging international air traffic control systems.
- Upgrading aircraft navigation by taking advantage of the new Global Positioning System.

"The Mid-Term program is a model for international cooperation," said Garry Porter, Boeing NATO AWACS program manager. "We've established a team of premier defense contractors from Europe, Canada and the United States to continue the modernization of this critical NATO asset."

The E-3 fills the needs of both airborne surveillance, and command and control communications functions for NATO air and maritime forces. An "eye in the sky," AWACS has a 360-degree view of the horizon, and can track air and sea targets simultaneously.

Major subcontractors on the program include Daimler-Benz Aerospace AG, and Siemens Defence Systems, Germany; Kongsberg Defence Systems, Norway; Alcatel Bell NV, Belgium; Computing Devices Canada; Litton Systems Inc., Rockwell International and Lockheed Martin Federal Systems, United States; Computer Resources International A/S, Denmark; and Elmer S.p.A, and MID S.p.A., Italy.

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