Boeing Begins Modification Work on T-38 Avionics Upgrade Program

Boeing celebrated a major milestone on the T-38 Avionics Upgrade program today with a ribbon-cutting and site dedication ceremony at its facility at Williams Gateway Airport in Mesa, Ariz.

The Boeing Company received a $45.6 million contract from the U.S. Air Force in July 1996 to install a comprehensive avionics package in the Air Force's advanced supersonic trainers. This program is currently expected to include more than 500 T-38 aircraft. The upgrade program provides the T-38 with more reliable and modern avionics and subsystems that will extend the aircraft's utilization well into the 21st century.

"The avionics that have been standard in the T-38 Talon since it entered service in 1961 will be replaced with state-of-the-art digital technology," said Jim Restelli, Boeing vice president of Aerospace Support for McDonnell Aircraft and Missile Systems in St. Louis. "Boeing has the proven expertise to do this work, and along with it comes a dedication to helping the armed forces of our nation and its allies produce the finest aviators in the world."

As part of the T-38 Avionics Upgrade program, Boeing will install a variety of non-developmental systems that were not available when the aircraft was first manufactured. The forward and aft cockpits will be converted to include a large field of view head-up display, multi-functional displays, electronic engine displays, up-front control panels, a global positioning system/inertial navigation system, and a traffic collision avoidance system. In addition, Boeing will be responsible for delivering Operational Flight Trainers and Unit Training Devices, as well as logistics support of the aircraft's avionics and trainers.

"Our future Air Force fighter and bomber pilots will be able to train with the same cutting-edge technology that they will see in the cockpits of their operational airplanes," Restelli said. "This upgrade program also will increase the reliability of the venerable T-38 almost four-fold, while ensuring training costs are as affordable as possible."

Boeing serves as prime contractor and is teamed with Israel Aircraft Industries as the major subcontractor. First flight of an upgraded T-38 is scheduled for July 1998. Modification of the aircraft will be done by Boeing at Williams Gateway Airport.

Williams Gateway Airport is developing as an internationally recognized airport and aerospace center with aircraft manufacturing, maintenance, modification, testing, pilot training and air cargo/air passenger service.

In addition to the T-38 Avionics Upgrade program, Boeing also is producing sophisticated maintenance trainers for the AH-64D Apache Longbow and is operating a spares repair facility at Williams Gateway Airport.

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