Boeing Wins Initial Design Activity Contract For Australian Airborne Early Warning & Control System

Boeing has been awarded one of three Initial Design Activity contracts by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for ProjectWedgetail , an airborne early warning & control (AEW&C) system. The contract is worth $6.5 million.

During the next year, Boeing will work closely with the ADF on developing a design solution that meets its AEW&C requirements.

The AEW&C system being offered combines the new high-performance Boeing 737-700 aircraft with the Northrop Grumman Multi-role Electronically Scanned Array (MESA) radar. Included in the platform are an advanced identification friend or foe (IFF) system; an expanded, passive surveillance system; a flexible, open-system architecture and a highly effective self-defense capability. The 737-700 features state-of-the-art avionics, navigation equipment and flight deck. It has a maximum speed of .80 Mach and a ceiling in excess of 40,000 feet.

Using the latest sensor technology, Northrop Grumman's 360-degree steerable beam MESA radar is able to track air and sea targets simultaneously and can help the operator track high-performance aircraft while continuously scanning the operational area. More than 400 hours of wind tunnel testing have demonstrated the compatibility of the aircraft and the radar.

Boeing and Northrop Grumman's Electronic Sensors and Systems Division have been leaders in airborne early warning technology for more than 30 years. Boeing Australia and British Aerospace Australia are Australia's most experienced aerospace contractors in the AEW&C field. Boeing Australia is providing system engineering and airplane modification support, and is leading the product support and ground support systems teams. British Aerospace Australia is providing the passive surveillance system, electronic warfare self-protect system, operational mission and mission support segment and the AEW&C support facility.

"We have unique domain and technical experience and have formed a strong project team," said Bob Roe, Boeing vice president and 737 AEW&C program manager.

"Boeing and Northrop Grumman's combined airframe, integration, mission avionics and radar experience have made AWACS the premier AEW&C system in the world. Our technical approach provides significant advances in AEW&C capabilities offering a solution with an acceptable risk.

"Boeing Australia and British Aerospace Australia with their domain experience, critical to our AEW&C solution, are helping us develop a plan to transfer technology to support the Royal Australian Air Force's desire to maintain and enhance the system in Australia with Australian workers," Roe said.

A production contract is expected to be awarded in 1999. The Royal Australian Air Force plans to enter the AEW&C capability into service in 2002.

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