Boeing 717-200 on Target for Rollout

Final assembly of the first Boeing 717-200 test airplane is progressing swiftly toward a May rollout. Work is well under way on two other test airplanes, as well as the first production model, which will be delivered in mid-1999.

The second of two engines has been installed on the first 717-200 test airplane, designated T-1. The advanced BMW/Rolls-Royce BR715 engines feature lower fuel consumption, reduced exhaust emissions and significantly lower noise levels than the power plants on comparable airplanes.

BMW/Rolls-Royce, one of 14 global supplier-partners on the 717 program, builds the BR715 engines in Dahlewitz, Germany. Development engines have completed more than 500 hours of testing, plus a successful 150-hour endurance test.

The program reached another major milestone recently when final-assembly employees pressurized T-1's hydraulics system for the first time. After checking hundreds of connections along a multitude of titanium lines, the workers increased the pressure slowly until it reached 3,000 pounds per square inch.

The test confirmed the integrity of the hydraulic systems for the airplane's flight controls, landing gears and doors, brakes and nose wheel steering.

Across an aisle way from the test airplanes, the first production airplane, designated P-1, is also taking shape. During the past few weeks, workers have lowered the center fuselage barrel onto the wing, marking the beginning of final assembly, and installed the nose section onto the newly joined fuselage. Prior to delivery, P-1 will join the three test airplanes in the flight test program.

In addition, the 717 Airplane Test & Validation team completed the flight-test program plan for the new 100-seat jetliner.

"This plan is a major milestone that shows how we're going to accomplish concurrent United States and European certification," said Jim Phillips, vice president of the 717 program. "The document addresses regulatory, safety and other issues, including the schedule for more than 800 specific tests for all four 717-200 flight-test airplanes." Flight-testing will start after first flight and will be based at the company's facility in Yuma, Ariz.

The 717-200 is produced by the Douglas Products Division of Boeing Commercial Airplane Group. AirTran Airlines is the launch customer for the 717-200 with 50 firm orders and 50 options for the new regional twinjet.

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