Boeing forms Aerospace Support Center for Special Operations Forces

Boeing has established a Special Operations Forces (SOF) Aerospace Support Center in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., combining its resources for SOF support into a single location.

The SOF Aerospace Support Center is located near the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) headquarters at Hurlburt Field, Fla. More than 180 Boeing employees currently support AFSOC programs at the company's Fort Walton Beach facility. That number could approximately double in the next few years as the Center expands with new programs and a larger facility.

"This SOF Aerospace Support Center focuses all Boeing resources, including those of the heritage McDonnell Douglas and Rockwell aerospace and defense businesses, to ensure our SOF customers receive the best value and shortest cycle times for their investment," said Jim Restelli, vice president and general manager of Aerospace Support, part of the McDonnell Aircraft and Missile Systems business unit. "Our SOF Aerospace Support Center is a key element in our goal of providing real-time support to the Special Operations warfighter," he said.

To accommodate the SOF Aerospace Support Center, the Fort Walton Beach facility is expanding its operations in an existing building to include approximately 60,000 square feet of work and laboratory space. The facility operates with an ISO 9001 quality certification and Software Engineering Institute Level 3 rating.

Boeing is a key supplier of new aircraft to AFSOC. The new Aerospace Support Center will bring life-cycle contractor logistics support for those aircraft and future Special Operations programs into one facility and will serve as the SOF focal point for Boeing.

Boeing has produced and delivered 13 AC-130U Spectre gunship conversions to AFSOC, establishing Boeing as the only contractor to have designed and manufactured C-130 gunships. The company continues to support the AC-130U, performing quick turnaround repairs; engineering support; full software support, including operation of the software integration laboratory; and modification programs.

Boeing also manufactures the U.S. Army SOF's MH-47E Chinook and MH-6 helicopters.

The company will play a key role in the future of Special Operations as well. Fifty AFSOC CV-22's, a version of the Bell/Boeing V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft tailored for SOF missions, will begin entering service after the turn of the century. In addition, the Air Mobility Master Plan has identified the requirement for 15 Boeing C-17 Globemaster III airlifters for the Special Operations mission.

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