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A Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile, equipped with a guidance system upgraded by The Boeing Company and teammate Honeywell, completed a successful test flight at 1:01 a.m. this morning from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.

Today's flight, the first of two planned development flight tests, validates the end-to-end operational capability of the Minuteman III missile with the upgraded guidance system.

Electronic Systems & Missile Defense, a business segment of The Boeing Company, received a contract for the Minuteman III Guidance Replacement Program (GRP) engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) in 1993.

The GRP objective is to replace aging guidance system electronics to maintain in-flight and weapon system reliability, and system supportability beyond the year 2020. GRP replaces the missile guidance control electronics, flight computer, the associated operational software, and upgrades the electronics in the inertial measurement unit. This flight test follows successful completion of more than two years of rigorous ground testing conducted at government facilities in Albuquerque, N.M.; Ogden, Utah; and Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.; and at the Boeing facility in Anaheim, Calif.

In March, the Air Force awarded Boeing a Low Rate Initial Production (LRIP) contract, which will result in the delivery of upgraded guidance systems beginning in May 1999 for operational deployment by the U.S. Air Force. The LRIP contract provides for the fabrication, test and installation of 40 upgraded Minuteman III guidance systems, with full-rate production expected to begin in 2000. A total of 652 upgraded guidance systems are planned to support 500 Minuteman III ICBMs.

The majority of GRP production efforts will be performed at the Boeing manufacturing facility in El Paso, Texas. Other production and test activities will be performed at the Boeing Guidance Repair Center in Heath, Ohio, and at the Clearwater, Fla., facility of Honeywell.

Electronic Systems & Missile Defense provides products and services to customers in its addressed markets of strategic missiles, missile defense systems, marine system products, as well as electronics products and sensor systems for global defense and commercial markets. With headquarters in Anaheim, Calif., the organization employs more than 6,500 people nationwide.

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