Boeing Begins Flight Tests Of EFX '98 Enhancements

Boeing has begun flight testing a number of enhancements installed on Test System 3 (TS-3), an Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) test aircraft.

The tests are in preparation for TS-3's participation in the U.S. Air Force's Expeditionary Force Experiment -- EFX '98 -- scheduled to begin Sept. 14. The goal of EFX '98 is to demonstrate how emerging command and control capabilities can significantly enhance U.S. forces' ability to decisively halt invading forces.

During the flight test program, performance of these system enhancements will be checked out against live targets, as well as with aircraft and ground systems participating in the exercise.

The enhancements, designed to increase an operator's situational awareness, include:

- a phased array antenna that can receive large amounts of information quickly, and perform other high-bandwidth applications not available to mobile platforms in the past;
- step-one architecture, an updated workstation and local area network environment capable of running theatre battle-management core-systems applications and other mission-planning software programs;
- a broadcast intelligence terminal, a stand-alone terminal, providing up-to-date information on potential threats from satellites and other off-board sources, and;
- Multi-Source Integration, which merges all information about a specific target into a single computer track -- showing a target's direction and speed -- thus, improving the reliability and accuracy of the tracking process and target identification.

"As the Air Force transitions to an Air Expeditionary Force, this is an outstanding opportunity to show how the application of modern technology to a combat-proven system can enable AWACS to remain one of the key components in establishing and maintaining air superiority," said Jim Singer, Boeing U.S. AWACS program manager.

The test flights follow the first major overhaul of TS-3 during its 20-year history. TS-3, maintained and operated in Seattle by Boeing for the Air Force, has logged more than 1,000 flights and 6,800 flight hours and is used to test AWACS enhancements such as radar improvements, new sensors, computers and displays. Test flights are conducted by crews consisting of U.S. Air Force and Boeing personnel.

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