Minuteman III Guidance Replacement Program Successfully Completes Second Flight Test

A Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) equipped with upgraded guidance electronics lifted off from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., today at 1:01 a.m. The upgraded guidance system is provided by The Boeing Company and is designed to extend the service life of the missile beyond the year 2020.

Boeing Electronic Systems & Missile Defense, Anaheim, Calif., has been under contract for the engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) of the guidance replacement program since August 1993. This second and final program development flight test further validates the end-to-end operational capability of the ICBM with the upgraded guidance system.

Early reports from the flight indicate that the system operated as expected. The first flight test was successfully conducted on June 24, and was found to meet or exceed all operational requirements. Following lift-off from Vandenberg, the missile traveled approximately 4,200 miles to the Kwajalein Missile Range.

The flight test program follows successful completion of more than two years of rigorous ground testing conducted at government facilities in Albuquerque, N.M.; Ogden, Utah; Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.; and the Boeing facility in Anaheim, Calif.

"Throughout the program, the Boeing/Honeywell team and our government customer have worked together as an integrated product team," said Robert D. Paster, vice president & general manager, Electronic Systems & Missile Defense. "The fact that we have met or exceeded our objectives throughout the ground and flight test program is a testament to the value of an integrated development approach."

Full-rate production is planned to begin in 2000 with a total of 652 units being produced to support 500 operational Minuteman III ICBMs. The upgraded guidance system low rate initial production (LRIP) efforts were initiated in March 1998 with award of the LRIP contract to Boeing. Guidance-hardware build efforts have commenced at the Boeing Electronics Strategic Manufacturing Center in El Paso, Texas, where all previous GRP engineering and operational model hardware was built. Honeywell, a teammate on the program, will conduct program production and test activities at its site in Clearwater, Fla.

The first operational guidance systems will be delivered to the Air Force in early 1999, ahead of the contract schedule. Under current LRIP contract requirements, 40 guidance units will be delivered to the U.S. Air Force.

Boeing has been involved in ICBM development, design, production and maintenance since the Minuteman I was conceptualized in 1958. In addition to the Guidance Replacement Program, Boeing is a team member on ICBM Prime and conducts a host of ICBM repair activities at the Boeing Guidance Repair Center, Heath, Ohio.

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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