Boeing Team Submits Response to Tender for Project Wedgetail

A Boeing-led team, including Northrop Grumman, British Aerospace Australia and Boeing Australia Limited, today submitted its response to a Request for Tender for Australia's Project Wedgetail, an airborne early warning & control (AEW&C) system.

The response, which details the team's solution to meet the AEW&C requirements of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), includes seven 737 AEW&C systems, plus ground support segments for flight and mission crew training, mission support and system modification support.

Source selection is expected by mid-1999.

The submittal completes an important stage of Australia's AEW&C acquisition strategy that began a year ago with an Initial Design Activity (IDA) contract. During that period, the Boeing team and Australia worked together to develop an approved functional requirements baseline and then developed detailed subsystem design requirements.

"We believe the 737 AEW&C system is the most operationally capable product being offered and also provides best value to the Australian Defence Force," said Bob Roe, Boeing 737 AEW&C program manager.

"We have the most experienced AEW&C team in the world. Australian companies have been given key roles in developing the Wedgetail system and demonstrated their ability to successfully perform during the IDA contract. Our team's experience and the results from significant risk mitigation efforts performed during IDA have been used to develop a credible and achievable project plan."

The Boeing AEW&C system combines the high-performance 737-700 aircraft with the Northrop Grumman Multi-role Electronically Scanned Array (MESA) radar with integrated identification friend or foe (IFF) capabilities. The airborne platform also includes an expanded electronic support measures (ESM) subsystem, a flexible, open-system architecture, an extensive communications suite, dual aerial refueling capability and a highly effective electronic warfare self-protection subsystem.

The 737-700 features state-of-the-art avionics, navigation equipment and flight deck. It has a maximum speed of .78 Mach and an operational ceiling of 40,000 feet. Because the 737 is the most popular jet in the world, there is a large base of suppliers, parts and support equipment.

Using the latest sensor technology, Northrop Grumman's 360-degree steerable beam MESA radar is able to track air and sea targets simultaneously and can help the operator track high-performance aircraft while continuously scanning the operational area. More than 750 hours of wind tunnel testing have demonstrated the compatibility of the aircraft and the radar.

Boeing and Northrop Grumman's Electronic Sensors and Systems Sector have been leaders in airborne early warning technology for more than 30 years. Boeing Australia Limited and British Aerospace Australia are the most experienced Australian aerospace contractors with experience relevant to the Wedgetail program.

Boeing Australia is providing systems engineering and airplane modification support, and is leading the product support and ground support segments teams. British Aerospace Australia is providing the ESM, electronic warfare self-protect subsystem, operational mission simulator and mission support segment and the AEW&C support facility. Australia's Qantas Airlines is providing maintenance support for the aircraft.

"Our Australian Industry Involvement plan fully meets Australia's objectives," Roe added. "Our Australian team members and other companies will develop the skills required to support life-efforts with their major roles in systems engineering and architecture definition, hardware and software design and development, systems integration, test and evaluation.

"Australian industry will have the prime role in aircraft component manufacturing, aircraft modification and equipment installation and checkout. Boeing Australia and British Aerospace Australia will help us create in Australia a 737 AEW&C Center of Excellence to ensure an effective transfer of technology and Australian support for Project Wedgetail, export sales and other high-technology applications."

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