JSF Avionics Flying Laboratory Makes First Flight In Wichita

A highly modified Boeing 737 made its first flight from Boeing facilities here on March 26 and began its service as a flying laboratory in support of the Boeing Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program.

After two test flights each lasting about two hours, the 737 Avionics Flying Laboratory was delivered to the Boeing JSF program in Seattle, four days ahead of schedule.

According to Ralph Cross, 737 Avionics Flying Laboratory program manager, the flights evaluated the aircraft's handling characteristics and verified the instrumentation and flight data collection systems.

In a less-than-one-year design and modification program, Boeing Military Programs - Wichita Division fitted a 48-inch nose and radome assembly to the forward pressure bulkhead of the 737-200 aircraft. The elongated nose will house avionics and instrumentation to aid development of the next-generation JSF aircraft. The aircraft also was fitted with several antennas, a heat exchanger and provisions for a supplemental power system.

Boeing initiated engineering design for the program last April, with modifications to the aircraft beginning in December.

Boeing Military Programs - Wichita Division, part of the Aerospace Support business unit, has extensive experience in aircraft modifications requiring high engineering content, including the 757 Flying Testbed for the F-22 program, the 767 Airborne Warning And Control System (AWACS) aircraft, and KC-135 reengining and multi-point refueling programs.

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