Wichita Meets Japan As Crews Join First Boeing 767-400ER Sections

Boeing mechanics today began driving rivets joining the 767-400ER (extended range) airframe sections forward of the wing. The two airframe segments lined up precisely - the flight deck cab built in the Boeing facility in Wichita, Kan., and the forward passenger cabin built by Japan's Kawasaki Heavy Industries.

"When metal meets metal like this, it says a lot about the excellent teamwork between the airplane program and its supplier, even though the two are thousands of miles apart," said Pat Shanahan, Boeing Commercial Airplanes Group program manager - 767-400ER. "We're well-prepared to build this new derivative because we've shared information and resolved problems together."

The 767-400ER - the newest and longest 767 - benefits from the use of computer-aided, three-dimensional, interactive (CATIA) design software. Digital data taken from where the two airframe sections meet gave both suppliers a well-defined contour of the adjoining section. CATIA also was the critical link in concurrent design of the airframe at the Boeing Everett facility and tooling design changes made in Japan.

While engineers used CATIA to define new portions of the airplane and convert a number of the original drawings, about 20 percent of the design remains on hand-drawn mylar sheets.

"We avoided significant cost by not converting the entire design to digital data," Shanahan explained. "The challenge is making sure the two-dimensional and three-dimensional data are integrated, and the reward is seeing the hardware snap together perfectly in the tooling."

At 201 feet, the 767-400ER is 21 feet longer than the 767-300 and 42 feet longer than the original 767-200. It seats 245 in a three-class configuration, 304 in a two-class configuration, and 375 in an all-economy configuration. The factory plans to join the entire airframe in June and roll the airplane out of the hangar in August. First flight is scheduled for October.

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For further information:
Debbie Nomaguchi
425-342-8537