Phase II UCAV Contract Awarded To Boeing

The Defense Advanced Projects Research Agency (DARPA) and the U.S. Air Force have selected The Boeing Company to continue into the second phase of the Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle (UCAV) Advanced Technology Demonstration program.

Under the $131 million cost-share effort, Boeing will develop two air vehicles, a reconfigurable mission control station and appropriate supportability elements to demonstrate the key technologies, operational capabilities and affordability benefits of integrating UCAVs into manned air combat operations.

"UCAVs represent a revolutionary new weapon system that can significantly increase the effectiveness and survivability of manned fighter aircraft while lowering the overall cost of combat operations," said Dave Swain, executive vice president of the Boeing Phantom Works, where the UCAV program is being conducted.

"To demonstrate their feasibility, Phantom Works is drawing on the extensive experience and resources Boeing has to offer in the areas of manned strike aircraft; weapon systems technology; unmanned air vehicles; and command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) technology," Swain added.

The U.S. DoD envisions employing UCAV weapon systems in the post-2010 battlespace to augment the manned force structure on high-risk, high-priority missions where mission success and survivability are key. The first such role planned for UCAVs is conducting supression of enemy air defenses (SEAD) missions ahead of the manned air combat force. "UCAVs also promise to significantly reduce acquisition and operation and support costs," said Rich Alldredge, UCAV program manager for the Phantom Works.

"Removing the pilot eliminates the need for pilot systems and interfaces, and allows for a smaller, simpler aircraft. No sorties are required for pilot training, and UCAVs can be placed in flight-ready storage for years, eliminating consumables, maintenance and personnel requirements," Alldredge said.

The Boeing UCAV system includes a tailless 27-foot long, 8,000-pound (empty) vehicle with a 34-foot wing; a reconfigurable mission control system with robust satellite-relay and line-of-site communications links for distributed control in all air combat situations; and a supportability approach that includes long-term, compact storage, periodic systems testing and re-assembly for flight in just over an hour.

Phantom Works developed its UCAV concepts in a $4 million Phase I contract, awarded in April 1998. In the 42-month, Phase II program, the Boeing Research & Development organization will actually build and flight test a demonstration system by 2002.

"This is a great opportunity for us to integrate today's UCAV technologies into a very capable UCAV demonstrator system to better understand its capabilities, affordability and system-of-systems effectiveness," Alldredge said. "We look forward to continuing this important development effort with DARPA and the U.S. Air Force."

Development of the Boeing UCAV demonstration system will be conducted by Phantom Works personnel in Seattle, St. Louis, Huntington Beach and Long Beach, Calif.; and Mesa, Ariz.

The UCAV Advanced Technology Demonstration program is sponsored by DARPA, with support from the Air Force Research Laboratory and the U.S. Air Force Air Combat Command. The government is funding $110 million of the $131 million effort, with the remainder coming from Boeing.

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