Boeing Team Wins Project Wedgetail Competition

A Boeing-led team, including Northrop Grumman's Electronic Sensors and Systems Sector, British Aerospace Australia and Boeing Australia Limited, has been selected as the preferred tenderer for Australia's Project Wedgetail, an airborne early warning & control (AEW&C) system.

Negotiations on the contract, worth more than $1 billion (US), should be completed by the end of the year.

The Boeing team's solution to meet the requirements of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) includes seven 737 AEW&C systems plus ground support segments for flight and mission crew training, mission support and system modification support. The ADF plans to enter the AEW&C capability into service in 2004 or 2005.

"This was a very hard-fought competition and the win is the result of a total commitment of our team," said Bob Roe, Boeing 737 AEW&C program manager.

"Through the Initial Design Activity contract, the Defence Acquisition Organization was able to communicate exactly what it wanted and challenge us to show how we were going to meet its needs. That process produced a very capable solution and the technical product and studies to prove the risks are fully understood. When this system is delivered, the ADF will have a technologically advanced AEW&C system that will meet its needs well into the 21st century."

Tom Gubala, Boeing vice president and general manager Information & Surveillance Systems, said, "We have the most experienced AEW&C team in the world. This experience has been acquired during 30 years of successfully designing, developing and managing 707 AWACS and 767 AWACS systems and upgrades.

"Australian companies have been given key roles in developing the Wedgetail system and demonstrated their ability to successfully perform during the Initial Design Activity contract. Our team's experience and the results from significant risk mitigation efforts performed during that contract were used to develop a credible and achievable project plan."

The 737 AEW&C system combines the high-performance 737-700 increased gross weight (IGW) 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 IGW features state-of-the-art avionics, navigation equipment and flight deck and an operational ceiling of 41,000 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 1,300 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 Australian aerospace contractors with the most experience critical to the Wedgetail program.

Boeing Australia is providing systems engineering and airplane modification support, and is leading the product support and AEW&C support center team. British Aerospace Australia is providing the ESM, electronic warfare self-protect subsystem, operational mission simulator, mission support segment and the AEW&C support facility. Marconi Aerospace Systems is providing mission computers and displays. Australia's Qantas Airways is providing maintenance support for the aircraft.

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