Boeing Delivers Real Time Video for Commando Solo

When the Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, asked if Boeing could provide a real-time video feed from the United States to an aircraft in flight over Europe with only two weeks' notice, the answer was "no problem."

The aircraft, an EC-130 named "Commando Solo," flown by the Pennsylvania Air National Guard 193rd Special Operations Wing, was outfitted with the Boeing phased array antenna system, which makes this unique mission possible. Commando Solo is the only airborne radio- and television-broadcasting platform in the world and its mission is to beam radio and television programming to target audiences in designated theaters of operation. The objective of the Air Force request was to expand the mission capabilities of the aircraft with live broadband video data reception on-board Commando Solo during flight.

Working with commercial satellite service providers and uplink sites on two continents, Boeing provided Commando Solo a video feed originating from a U.S. Army mobile uplink truck located in Colorado. The video stream was delivered via a triple-hop satellite feed into the aircraft flying in Central Europe.

"Commercial satellite service providers, who work daily in a short turn-around environment understood that our needs for quick support were a driving factor for the success of this request," said Bill Richards, Boeing systems engineer.

Loral Skynet is one of the satellite service providers that was particularly supportive in providing service virtually overnight.

"The key to any successful satellite-delivered video data stream is performing the necessary analysis of the system to make sure a data link can be obtained successfully," Richards said. "It is much like putting together a puzzle, the pieces all need to fit together to make a complete picture. It really helps to work with companies that have ability to provide pieces to the puzzle in a matter of hours," Richards added.

Using a commercially available product like the Boeing phased array antenna for a military application is one example of how The Boeing Company delivers dual-use technology that provides common solutions for different applications in a cost-effective and efficient way.

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