Stealth System Contract Awarded to Boeing

The Boeing Company has further confirmed its leadership in stealth technology development by winning a new U.S. Air Force contract to produce the Common Low Observables Verification System, also known as CLOVerS.

The Air Force wants to develop this new, portable system to quickly assess the low observables characteristics of stealth aircraft in the field in order to determine their mission readiness or need for repair. Such aircraft include the F-117, B-2 and F-22, and potentially the Joint Strike Fighter.

"With its growing inventory and deployment of stealth aircraft, the Air Force needs a better, faster, cheaper way to assess their LO integrity - before and after repairs - to ensure continued mission effectiveness and survivability," said Bill Shank, CLOVerS program manager for the Boeing Phantom Works.

"Our system not only provides this capability, it also identifies specific locations of LO problems and prioritizes their need for repair," Shank added. "This will significantly reduce the time and cost of making needed LO repairs - and avoid the cost of making unnecessary repairs."

Currently, the F-117, B-2 and F-22 lack field verification systems that are quickly deployable and can easily prioritize defects by their need for repair. As a result, these aircraft may require expensive, and possibly unnecessary, LO repairs in the field just to ensure safety.

CLOVerS solves this problem by having a self-propelled, omni-directional, fork lift-size chassis that can be driven around the flight line and in hangars for a quick assessment of any stealth aircraft. The assessment is done by a radar system and antennas attached to the top of an extendable mast, and an LO data analysis system attached to the chassis.

"We thought using a fork lift-type chassis was the best way to maximize the use of commercially available equipment and components to further reduce the cost of the system," Shank said. "The challenge is to integrate all the components together to make a system that works as designed."

Key components of CLOVerS include the SCI 1000 field portable radar system, zonal and full-body measurement antennas, software for automated flight line signature evaluation and diagnostics, a top-rated, multi-level security system and an integrated logistics support package.

Boeing is the systems integrator for CLOVerS and will supply the chassis, security system, logistics support and project software management. ERIM International is supplying the signature analysis software and hardware, the antenna suite and a field-deployable test lab. Sensor Concepts Inc. is providing the radar hardware and control software.

"The strength of the technical capabilities of our team, our past performance on relevant contracts and the superior performance of our CLOVerS solution led to this award," Shank said. "The customer believed it was the best-value solution."

Work on the three-year, $20 million engineering and manufacturing development contract will be conducted in the Phantom Works - the R&D unit of Boeing dedicated to developing innovative, affordable aerospace solutions. The Phantom Works has been working on the leading edge of stealth technology since the early 1970's through numerous proprietary programs.

If the development of CLOVerS proceeds as planned, the Air Force will begin low-rate initial production in 2001.

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