Boeing Wedgetail Negotiations With Australia On Track

Boeing says contract negotiations have begun with the Australian Department of Defence on Project Wedgetail, an Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) system for the Australian Defence Force (ADF). A Boeing-led team was selected by the ADF in July.

Bob Roe, Boeing 737 AEW&C program manager, said "Significant progress was made during the initial meeting that was conducted in mid-August."

Those discussions covered a wide range of items including a review of the work to be accomplished in Australia. During the review, Boeing reconfirmed that Boeing Australia would use a new facility to be built at Royal Australian Air Force Amberley in Queensland to modify five 737-700 Increased Gross Weight aircraft to meet the Wedgetail's specific requirements.

David Gray, Boeing Australia managing director, said the facility also is to be used to support a number of other Boeing Australia programs.

"The company has a long-term vision of the Amberley facility becoming Australia's world class center for airborne early warning, engineering and support as well as aircraft production, modification and maintenance activities supporting other Australian Defence Force projects."

"Our team's proposal clearly defined the venues for other activities and further announcements will be forthcoming," Gray said.

"There will be a substantial amount of activity in the Williamtown area as Boeing sets up to support the AEW&C weapons system through its life of the aircraft," he said.

Since being down-selected, Boeing has been continuing to develop the system both in Seattle and Australia, and planning in more detail the implementation of the system acquisition.

The Multi-role Electronically Scanned Array (MESA) radar system design is proceeding at Northrop Grumman's facility at Baltimore, Md., with wind-tunnel testing now complete and detailed load and structure analysis being undertaken.

The contract for the AEW&C is expected to be signed late this year, with delivery of the first aircraft scheduled for the 2004-2005 time frame.

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