Boeing Selects Smiths Industries Component for New Avionics Modernization Architecture

The Boeing Company has selected the Smiths Industries PowerPC-based Central Processing Unit as a cornerstone element for the company's military aircraft avionics modernization initiatives, including the KC-10 Global Air Traffic Management (GATM) program.

"We've identified an affordable, flexible system architecture, which includes the Smiths Industries CPU, that gives best value to our customers," said Keith Hertzenberg, vice president of Modernization and Upgrade Programs, part of the Boeing Military Aerospace Support business. "As well, we have demonstrated that having that common architecture applied on multiple platforms drives lower total ownership costs for our customers."

For the KC-10 program, the Smiths Industries CPU will be used as the system processor and VMEbus controller in the Boeing-developed Data Concentrator Unit. The CPU hardware and software will be FAA-certified to level A, which is the highest possible criticality.

Smiths Industries was selected over traditional military and commercial CPU suppliers based on the company's extensive experience with FAA certification programs, CPU performance, and the flexibility that its CPU provided for software development.

"The Smiths Industries CPU offers the greatest capabilities and the best value of any available on the market," Hertzenberg said.

The KC-10 GATM program, which was awarded to Boeing in early 2000, is currently in the design and development phase.

Through the program, the KC-10 tanker fleet will become compliant with the international GATM standard of air navigation for commercial and military aircraft, which requires certain avionics, navigation and communication capabilities.

The prototype aircraft will be modified at the Boeing Military Maintenance and Modification Center in Wichita, Kan., and flight testing is expected to begin in first quarter 2002. A second KC-10 will be modified at the Boeing Aerospace Support Center in San Antonio, Texas, to validate the installation kit, after which production modifications of the remaining 57 KC-10 tankers will follow.

Boeing has completed some of the most complex avionics challenges, including the F-22, E-3 AWACS, AC-130 Gunship, AH-64D Apache Longbow and state-of-the-art Boeing commercial airliners like the 777 and 737 Next-Generation series. Through the Military Aerospace Support business, Boeing provides low-risk, affordable upgrade solutions to post-production aircraft and rotorcraft as well.

The company is completing a major avionics upgrade to the U.S. Air Force fleet of T-38 Talon advanced jet trainers. It is competing for the C-130 Avionics Modernization Program, through which about 500 Air Force Hercules aircraft will receive modern, common cockpit systems.

By focusing its modernization and upgrades capabilities; maintenance and modification centers; training services; logistics personnel services; and sustainment data and supply chain management support competencies in the Military Aerospace Support business, Boeing is the only major airframe manufacturer with an integrated organization structured to provide total life-cycle customer support for military aircraft and weapons systems.

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