Seven Aircraft in U.S. AWACS Fleet with New Radar Upgrade Reach Initial Operational Capability

The U.S. Air Force has declared initial operational capability (IOC) for seven of its Boeing-built E-3 AWACS aircraft, upgraded with a powerful new radar capability. IOC means the Air Force can commit the aircraft to operational missions to take full advantage of the Radar System Improvement Program (RSIP) kits.

RSIP improves the E-3's radar by increasing the sensitivity of the pulse Doppler radar, allowing the aircraft to detect and track smaller targets. It also improves the radar's existing computer with a new high-reliability multi-processor and rewrites the software to make it easier to maintain and enhance in the future.

The RSIP kit, built by Northrop Grumman's Electronic Sensors and Systems Sector, consists of a new radar computer, a radar control maintenance panel, electrical and mechanical software and hardware.

Boeing, as prime contractor and systems integrator, delivered the RSIP kits to Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., where depot maintenance personnel performed the installation.

Seven AWACS aircraft have been upgraded so far, with the remaining fleet of 33 aircraft, expected to be completed by 2005. The RSIP contract is worth $217 million, of which $107 million has been awarded to date.

Brig. Gen. Ben T. Robinson, commander, 552nd Air Control Wing, home to the U.S. AWACS fleet at Tinker, said, "RSIP has proven to be a vast improvement over our current mission radar. It's improved detection of today's lower radar cross section fighters is truly a force multiplier."

RSIP installation was completed on the NATO and United Kingdom AWACS fleets in 2000.

RSIP-equipped NATO AWACS aircraft participated in the Allied air campaign over Kosovo with outstanding results. The radar surveillance coverage area was substantially increased, more aircraft were spotted and tracked and the radar's reliability improved significantly.

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