Boeing Begins $60 Million Upgrade of Saudi Arabia's AWACS Fleet

The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] has begun installing new mission computers and other hardware and software on the Royal Saudi Air Force's (RSAF) fleet of five AWACS aircraft, as part of a contract worth approximately $60 million.

Work will be done in Seattle, with the first two aircraft retrofitted this year and the next three in 2002.

Under the contract, Boeing will upgrade the aircraft's mission computer and software to the same level currently in use by United States Air Force AWACS fleet and provide RSAF operator training. This enhancement will provide improved operator capabilities and equipment reliability.

"This major computing upgrade is a critical first step to adding future enhancements to the RSAF AWACS fleet's communication and sensor systems," said Mike Brewer, Boeing Saudi AWACS program manager.

Saudi Arabia's AWACS fleet is part of the Peace Sentinel program that began in 1981. It included the five AWACS aircraft and eight KE-3 refueling tanker aircraft, along with spare parts, trainers and support equipment. The first Saudi E-3s were delivered in June 1986, with deliveries of the remaining E-3s and tankers completed by September 1987.

AWACS is the world's standard for airborne early warning and control systems. Currently carried on-board militarized 707 and 767 aircraft, it fills the need for both airborne surveillance and command and control functions for tactical and air defense forces.

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