Boeing Completes Major Cockpit/Communications System Upgrade on E-6B Aircraft

The Boeing Company's [NYSE: BA] successful installation of the Next Generation 737 glass cockpit into the first of 16 U.S. Navy E-6B 707 communications aircraft means a more pilot-friendly, powerful and reliable flight deck.

The new cockpit and avionics also are a cost-effective way of achieving compliance with Global Air Traffic Management requirements. This will provide the Navy continued access to preferred airspace as International Civil Aviation Organization guidelines are implemented around the world.

Under a $123 million contract, Boeing will replace the fleet's analog cockpit instruments with state-of-the-art flat-panel digital displays and dual flight management systems. Use of this commercial-off-the-shelf technology will dramatically improve long-term support to the fleet.

Flight testing of the first aircraft begins in the second quarter of 2002 at the Boeing Maintenance and Modification Center in Wichita, Kan. Delivery to the Navy is scheduled for the third quarter of 2002. Retrofit of the entire fleet is expected to be completed in 2005.

In addition to the cockpit upgrade, Boeing also integrated new battle management, command, control and communications mission equipment adding communications links to the Navy's primary airborne strategic command and control system, while at the same time reducing overall aircraft weight and improving readiness.

Dave Brower, E-6 program manager, said, "The new communications capabilities provide the equivalent of high-speed DSL-quality connectivity aboard the aircraft, delivering on-demand access to the government's classified and unclassified communications links. Connexion by Boeing will provide the initial broadband satellite service for the first 1,000 hours of aircraft operations".

"This aircraft modification effort is an effective application of state-of-the-art, off-the-shelf commercial and military advanced communications systems and infrastructure to affordably meet military needs," Brower said.

The E-6, which provides a vital communications link between national command authorities and U.S. strategic nuclear forces, is a modified 707-320B aircraft. Boeing delivered 16 E-6 airplanes to the U.S. Navy from 1989 to 1992.

Boeing Space and Communications (S&C), headquartered in Seal Beach, Calif., is the world's largest space and communications company. A unit of The Boeing Company, S&C provides integrated solutions in launch services, human space flight and exploration, missile defense, and information and communications. It is NASA's largest contractor; a leading provider of space-based communications; the primary systems integrator for U.S. missile defense; and a leading provider of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. The global enterprise has customers worldwide and manufacturing operations throughout the United States and Australia.

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