Boeing, Insitu to Cooperatively Develop Unmanned Vehicle Prototype

The Boeing Company and The Insitu Group recently agreed to develop a prototype unmanned aerial vehicle system based on Insitu's Seascan aircraft, a move that could bolster Boeing research of small, long-range unmanned platforms.

Through this agreement, Bingen, Wash.-based Insitu will build for Boeing a prototype known as Scan Eagle, using Boeing systems integration, communications and payload technologies. Financial terms of the 15-month agreement aren't being disclosed.

"Cooperation with innovative, entrepreneurial companies such as Insitu is key to our growth," said Dina Hyde, general manager of partnerships and new ventures for the Boeing Unmanned Systems organization. "We can leverage their technologies with the best of Boeing to open new opportunities in the government and commercial arenas."

Seascan is a ship-based surveillance platform weighing about 33 pounds with a nearly 10-foot wingspan. Ultimately it may be able to travel 5,000 miles during a three-day flight.

"Our goal is to develop low-cost, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles offering a high degree of autonomy," said Tad McGeer, Insitu's founder, chairman and chief technology officer. "Working with Boeing is a tremendous benefit for us."

In 1998, Insitu and the University of Washington demonstrated the potential of these vehicles by flying one 2,000 miles from Newfoundland to Scotland, using 1.5 gallons of gasoline.

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