Boeing Selects Smiths Aerospace for 767 Tanker Component

The Boeing Company has selected Smiths Aerospace to supply the hose-and-drogue refueling system for its 767 Global Tanker Transport Aircraft.

Smiths, through its recent acquisition of Able Corporation, will provide this key system for 767 Tanker Transports that will be acquired by customers around the globe. The Italian Air Force will receive the first of these new tankers in 2005.

"Forming a team of preeminent supplier partners has been our priority since we began our company-funded development program for the 767 Tanker Transport program five years ago," said Bob Gower, vice president of Tanker Programs for Boeing. "The addition of Smiths Aerospace, which has a significant presence both in the United States and in the United Kingdom, is an important step in bringing that team together."

Smiths Aerospace will utilize capabilities from a number of its operations in the 767 Tanker Transport program: program management and systems/software engineering in Grand Rapids, Mich.; manufacturing in Clearwater, Fla.; structural component engineering and manufacturing from its aero structures business in Southampton, U.K.; and primary hose-and-drogue refueling components from Able near Los Angeles, Calif.

Smiths Aerospace already provides the mission control system for the 767 Tanker Transport.

Boeing estimates that more than 85 percent of the total dollar value of the 767 Tanker Transport program will be with companies within the United States.

The 767 Tanker Transport is competing for a global market estimated at about 500 aircraft over the next 30 years. The market has an estimated value of $100 billion.

Boeing has been the leader in air-refueling aircraft for more than 50 years. The company has delivered almost 2,000 tanker aircraft, and has developed essential technologies, such as the "flying boom," which is the U.S. Air Force preferred method of in-flight refueling.

As the "right-sized" aircraft for the air-refueling mission, the Boeing 767 Tanker Transport delivers the optimal fuel-offload performance and operating costs for strategic and in-theater tanker missions. Because company-funded development has been ongoing over the past five years, Boeing can provide the most capable, lowest risk tankers to the flight line faster and more affordably than any other candidate.

These factors led to the selection of the 767 Tanker Transport by Italy and Japan in head-to-head competitions for new air-refueling aircraft.

Late last year, Congress granted the U.S. Air Force the authority to negotiate a lease for up to 100 767 Tankers as the first step in replacing its Eisenhower-era KC-135 fleet. Negotiations are expected to be complete this summer. Boeing produced 732 KC-135 tankers for the Air Force between 1957-65; some 540 are still in service today.

"We are committed to providing the Air Force and the American taxpayer with an affordable, low-risk, highly capable tanker to address the nation's vital air-refueling mission requirements," said Gower.

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