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NASA has awarded a \$1.14 billion contract to Rocketdyne Propulsion & Power, a unit of The Boeing Company [NYSE:BA] to provide maintenance and support to the space shuttle's reusable main engines for the next five years.

The contract signed this week at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala. includes the manufacture, assembly, test and delivery of three additional Space Shuttle Main Engines (SSME). The SSME -- which began development at Boeing Rocketdyne in 1971 -- is still the only operational, reusable liquid booster engine designed for human space flight.

The maintenance of existing engines and the production of new SSMEs will ensure safe, reliable operations as NASA meets an annual manifest of six shuttle flights in support of the International Space Station.

"This contract will keep the Space Shuttle Main Engine flying safely for another five years," said Jim Paulsen, program manager for SSME at Boeing Rocketdyne. "It also continues the strong relationship Rocketdyne has with NASA at the Marshall Space Flight Center. It's a partnership that for nearly a half-century has resulted in world-class space propulsion technology for America's space program."

In addition to program support by Boeing Rocketdyne at the Marshall Space Flight Center, work under the contract includes engineering and manufacturing at the Boeing Rocketdyne facility in Canoga Park; test support for engine testing at NASA's John C. Stennis Space Center in Mississippi; and engine assembly at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

The cryogenic engine is the most reliable and highly tested large rocket engine ever built. The SSMEs have achieved 100% flight success with a demonstrated reliability of over 0.999. Using a mixture of liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen, the SSME can attain a maximum thrust level (in vacuum) of 512,950 pounds, which is equivalent to greater than 12,000,000 horsepower. Three SSMEs are used on each shuttle flight to provide the majority of power needed to achieve orbit.

Rocketdyne Propulsion & Power is a global leader in the design, development and manufacture of rocket propulsion and space power systems. In addition to the SSME, Boeing Rocketdyne provides propulsion systems for Delta and Atlas launch vehicles. The Rocketdyne RS-68 engine for the Boeing Delta IV family of expendable launch vehicles is the first large liquid-fueled rocket engine to be certified for flight in the United States since Rocketdyne developed the SSME. Boeing Rocketdyne is also designing propulsion systems as part of NASA's Space Launch Initiative.

Boeing Space and Communications (S&C), headquartered in Seal Beach, Calif., is the world's largest space and communications 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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