Boeing-Built Satellite Beefs Up U.S. Forces' Communications in Afghanistan

A Boeing-built U.S. Navy communications satellite, launched nine years ago and formerly used as an in-orbit spare, has a new mission providing critical military communications capacity for U.S. forces in Operation Enduring Freedom.

The spacecraft, UHF Follow-On (UFO) F-2, is the oldest active UFO satellite built by Boeing Space and Communications (S&C), a unit of The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA], for the Navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) in San Diego. Launched in September 1993 and stationed over Africa, UFO F-2 was an on-orbit spare for the UFO constellation. It now provides nine additional channels of vital voice and data communications capacity to U.S. forces in the Afghanistan region.

"The call went out for more narrowband capability to support the country's response to the September 11 attacks. In response, we were able to provide supplemental capacity to the Afghanistan operations by implementing a frequency reuse scheme," said William Nicholas, SPAWAR launch operations manager. "As a result, we increased the total UHF bandwidth available to the region by upward of 15 percent."

The UFO Program Office at SPAWAR recently received letters of commendation from U.S. Navy Secretary Gordon England for the UFO fleet's procurement and ongoing operation, and from the U.S. Space Command for its successful efforts to increase satellite bandwidth available to Operation Enduring Freedom.

Since 1993, Boeing has delivered 10 UFO spacecraft and is currently building the last remaining UFO spacecraft, F-11, which is due to launch in 2003. Boeing also heads an industry team competing for the UFO fleet's successor, the Mobile User Objective System (MUOS).

"Seeing the oldest spacecraft in the UFO fleet still able to meet new demands in the fight against terrorism speaks volumes about the technology Boeing provides to the nation's armed forces, be it in the UFO fleet or in our bid to build MUOS," said Randy Brinkley, president of Boeing Satellite Systems, the satellite-manufacturing arm of Boeing S&C. "We are extremely proud of our long service to U.S. forces through the UFO program."

The UFO satellites provide narrowband mobile communications to support the Navy's global communications network, Navy ships at sea, and a variety of other U.S. military fixed and mobile terminals. MUOS will provide expanded global communications to all U.S. forces in such hard-to-reach places as thick jungle, urban canyons, mountainous terrain or at sea.

Boeing 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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For further information:
Richard Esposito
(310) 335-6314
richard.esposito@boeing.com
Ann Beach
(562) 797-4222
ann.m.beach@boeing.com