Boeing Awarded Contract to Complete X-37 Development and Flight Test

Boeing [NYSE: BA] has announced that it was awarded a NASA contract to continue development of the X-37 reusable spaceplane and conduct atmospheric and orbital flight tests.

Under this $301 million Space Launch Initiative contract, which includes options through 2006, Boeing Phantom Works will complete the final assembly of the X-37 Approach and Landing Test Vehicle and conduct an atmospheric flight test in April 2004. The contract also initiates a design for an additional X-37 long-duration orbital vehicle, currently scheduled to be inserted into low Earth orbit by a Delta II booster in July 2006.

"This award solidifies our commitment to long-term development of next-generation launch technologies," said Ron Prosser, vice president of Boeing Integrated Defense Advanced Systems. "We look forward to being part of NASA's long-range plans to achieve safe, low-cost and dependable access to space. The X-37 will provide the initial technologies to help carry out this strategy."

All Boeing X-37 activities are structured to mature technologies needed for a future orbital space plane, and are designed to reduce risks for future reusable space transportation systems.

"Working with NASA, our team went the extra mile to preserve what we believe is a vital program. The contract provides the X-37 program with a concrete roadmap for the future, and we are extremely pleased," said Kevin Neifert, division director of Advanced Space and Launch Systems for Phantom Works.

Currently in final assembly at the Boeing Phantom Works X-Vehicle Assembly Facility in Palmdale, Calif., the X-37 is 27.5 feet in length and has a wingspan of 15 feet. During April 2004, the X-37 Approach and Landing Test Vehicle will be dropped from a NASA B-52H at 45,000 feet and perform an autonomous landing on an Edwards Air Force Base runway. The test will verify the X-37's flight dynamics and also extend the flight envelope beyond the low speed/low altitude tests carried out successfully by the sub-scale X-40A Space Maneuver Vehicle during 2001.

When fielded, the unpiloted and autonomously operated X-37 will be the only X-vehicle capable of conducting continuous on-orbit operations for up to 21 days. In addition, the vehicle will serve as a test bed for approximately 30 airframe, propulsion and operation technologies and gather test data in the Mach 25 (reentry) region of flight.

Within the airframe itself, a variety of experiments and technologies will be tested, including a highly durable high-temperature thermal protection system and important new aerodynamic features. Its modular design also includes a seven-foot by four-foot bay for other experiments.

The X-37 government team is led by NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Ala., and also includes NASA's Ames Research Center, Moffet Field, Calif.; Kennedy Space Center, Fla.; Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Md.; Langley Research Center, Hampton, Va.; Dryden Flight Research Center; and the U.S. Air Force Flight Test Center, Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

Boeing Phantom Works is the catalyst of innovation within the company. By working with the company's business units it provides advanced solutions and innovative, breakthrough technologies that reduce cycle time and cost while improving the quality and performance of aerospace products and services.

The Boeing Company is the world's largest manufacturer of satellites, commercial jetliners and military aircraft. In terms of sales, Boeing is the largest exporter in the United States. Total company revenues for 2001 were $58 billion.

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