Second Boeing X-45A UCAV Completes First Flight

The second Boeing [NYSE: BA] X-45A Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle technology demonstrator has successfully completed its first flight at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center, Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

After taking off last Thursday from the dry lakebed at NASA-Dryden, X-45A vehicle No. 2 flew for approximately 30 minutes and reached an air speed of 195 knots and an altitude of 7,500 feet. This flight comes six months after the first flight of X-45A vehicle No. 1 on May 22.

"We're very excited about the second X-45A demonstration vehicle joining the flight test program," said Darryl Davis, Boeing UCAV program manager. "Operating two aircraft in flight test will validate the test points more rapidly, and demonstrate the robustness of the system we're developing with our Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, and the U.S. Air Force team."

After initial X-45A flight worthiness tests are completed, the maturing test process will eventually involve flying the two UCAV demonstrators in formation, operating with manned aircraft, dropping ordnance, and performing autonomous missions in simulated threat scenarios.

Toward this objective, the UCAV program successfully demonstrated in October a distributed, multi-vehicle control capability for the UCAV Mission Control Segment, or MCS. The demonstration, conducted at the Boeing Simulation Integration Laboratory in Seattle, showed how the MCS software allows a single operator to control more than one air vehicle in support of fixed target strikes and suppression of enemy air defense missions.

"I'm extremely proud of the accomplishments of the government/industry test execution team, led by Gary Cosentino of NASA and Roy Smith of Boeing," commented Col. Earl Wyatt, the DARPA UCAV program manager. "The joint team deserves a tremendous amount of the credit for the success we've demonstrated to date."

The Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle represents a revolutionary new weapon system that can significantly increase the effectiveness and survivability of manned fighter aircraft while lowering the overall cost of combat operations.

In addition to the two X-45A UCAV demonstration vehicles, the UCAV program is also designing and building two more operationally representative prototypes that will demonstrate the military utility and operational value of the UCAV system.

The Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle system is being developed by the Boeing Phantom Works and Boeing Integrated Defense Systems business units in partnership with DARPA and the U.S. Air Force. Phantom Works is the advanced research and development unit of Boeing, which serves as the catalyst for innovation for the enterprise.

Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses. Headquartered in St. Louis, Integrated Defense Systems is a $23 billion business. It provides systems solutions to its global military, government and commercial customers. It is a leading provider of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; the world's largest military aircraft manufacturer; the world's largest satellite manufacturer and a leading provider of space-based communications; the primary systems integrator for U.S. missile defense; NASA's largest contractor; and a global leader in launch 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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