Boeing ScanEagle UAV Plays Integral Role in Navy Giant Shadow Experiment

ScanEagle, a Boeing [NYSE: BA] long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle, or UAV, demonstrated the ability to relay real-time data and provide video to participants during the U.S. Navy's Giant Shadow experiment at a test site in the Bahamas.

Giant Shadow was set up to explore how a network of forces consisting of a stealthy attack submarine, Special Operations Forces, unmanned vehicles -- ScanEagle and an unmanned underwater vehicle -- and sensors could provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, or ISR, and then develop, recommend and execute appropriate action.

ScanEagle, which has a 10-foot wingspan and can fly up to 68 knots, served as a relay node for a radio frequency communications network during the four-day exercise. It also provided ISR for over-the-horizon surveillance that included a live video feed to the Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command ship and to NAVAIR's time-critical targeting and network-centric warfare test aircraft.

Launched from shore via a pneumatic catapult, ScanEagle flew at altitudes of 1,000-3,000 ft. during five flights and 20 hours, in support of the series of exercises. It was recovered using the patented SkyHook technique, in which the UAV catches a rope hanging from a 30-foot-high pole.

"We're pleased that ScanEagle successfully performed its key mission as part of this unique exercise," said Charlie Guthrie, Boeing Unmanned Systems director of rapid prototyping and advanced concepts. "This further adds to our confidence that we're able to provide potential customers, such as the Navy, with an autonomous, low-cost, long-endurance UAV that will meet their needs."

In February 2002, Boeing teamed with The Insitu Group to build and test ScanEagle. Insitu builds the UAV at its Bingen, Wash., factory and Boeing provides the systems integration, communications and payload technologies expertise.

ScanEagle is based on Insitu's SeaScan aircraft, a commercial ship-based surveillance platform. In 1998, Insitu and the University of Washington demonstrated the potential of these types of vehicles when they coordinated the first UAV transatlantic flight, a 2,000-mile trip from Newfoundland to Scotland that used only 1.5 gallons of gasoline.

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