Boeing Begins Flight Testing New JDAM on B-2

The U.S. Air Force started flight-testing a Boeing [NYSE: BA] 500-pound JDAM on the B-2 bomber with recent successful separation tests at Edwards AFB, Calif.

A B-2 bomber released 16 of the lightweight JDAMs, designated MK-82 500-pound JDAM or GBU-38 by the Air Force, from four smart bomb racks in the bomb bay of the aircraft. The new smart bomb racks were designed and built by Boeing to allow the B-2 to carry up to 80 of the 500-pound JDAM bombs.

Each smart bomb rack carries 20 500-pound JDAMs. Boeing engineers and produces the electronics that directs the power and interface signals to the JDAMs in St. Charles, Mo., while workers at the Boeing facilities in Seattle engineered, manufactured, and installed the bomb rack kit and software to the B-2. The flight test was to verify that the weapons could be dropped from the aircraft successfully in a planned sequence with the correct timing and spacing between individual bombs.

"The potential to drop 80 500-pound JDAMs on separate targets gives the B-2 an enormous capability," said Kim Michel, Boeing JDAM program manager. "The smaller warhead means less collateral damage as well as increased quantity on the aircraft."

JDAM is a low-cost guidance kit that converts existing unguided free-fall bombs into accurately guided "smart" weapons. Boeing is producing kits for both 2,000 - and 1,000-pound. warheads. A contract is expected this spring to begin production of a 500-pound warhead kit.

The tests mark the final stage of the development program for the GBU-38. Boeing completed initial testing from the F-16 aircraft last fall. Flight-testing is also continuing on the F/A-18. Boeing Integrated Defense Systems received a $45 million contract in September 2000 to develop the GBU-38. Flight-testing on the B-2 will continue through this summer.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $25 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.

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