Boeing, Insitu Sign Contract, Move Toward ScanEagle UAV Production

Boeing [NYSE:BA] and The Insitu Group last week signed a long-term contract allowing the companies to continue collaborative efforts and begin production on the low-cost, long-endurance ScanEagle autonomous unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV).

The contract, which has the potential to run for up to 10 years, follows a 15-month agreement signed in February 2002 to develop a prototype UAV based on Insitu's Seascan miniature robotic aircraft. As part of the initial agreement Insitu will deliver three prototype vehicles to Boeing in the coming weeks.

"This new agreement enables the Boeing/Insitu team to focus on ScanEagle production, as well as further our research and development efforts," said Al Awani, ScanEagle program manager for Boeing. "We've put a solid framework in place to grow the ScanEagle family and expect to begin building production vehicles in the near future."

Boeing and Insitu foresee a variety of surveillance and communication roles for ScanEagle in the military, homeland security and commercial arenas.

"Insitu's focus is rapid prototyping of innovative and economical robotic vehicles," said Steve Sliwa, Insitu president and chief executive officer, "while Boeing provides large-scale systems expertise, scalability, program management and reliable servicing options for customers. This makes Insitu an excellent complement to the Boeing Unmanned Systems organization."

Since the initial contract signing last year, three ScanEagle prototypes have completed more than 50 test flights with its first autonomous flight June 19, 2002.

Highlights in 2003 include participation in the U.S. Navy's Giant Shadow exercise. During five flights at a test range in the Bahamas, ScanEagle demonstrated the ability to serve as a data link and provide real-time reconnaissance video to the exercise participants. Boeing and Insitu received positive feedback from the U.S. Navy for ScanEagle's performance in an operational environment. In July, as part of the yearly Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International symposium, ScanEagle will make a demonstration flight at Webster Field, Md.

The four-foot long aircraft is the smallest UAV to carry an inertially stabilized gimbaled video camera -- standard equipment on all ScanEagles. The system allows the UAV to easily track both stationary and moving targets. Depending on customer requirements, ScanEagle is capable of carrying a number of other sensor payloads as well.

ScanEagle takes off from a catapult launcher and flies pre-programmed missions using the Global Positioning System. The UAV is then retrieved using a "Skyhook" system in which ScanEagle catches a rope hanging from a 50-foot high pole. The patented system will allow it to operate from forward fields, mobile vehicles or sea vessels. The ScanEagle family of vehicles will have endurance ranges from 15 to more than 40 hours.

The Boeing Company is the world's leading aerospace company, with its heritage mirroring the history of flight. It is the largest manufacturer of satellites, commercial jetliners, and military aircraft. The company is also a global market leader in missile defense, human space flight, and launch services. Chicago-based Boeing has an extensive global reach with customers in 145 countries.

The Insitu Group, located in Bingen, Wash., develops miniature robotic aircraft for commercial and military applications. Insitu, which demonstrated the first UAV to cross the Atlantic Ocean, developed its Seascan UAV to serve the commercial fishing industry for fish spotting. For more information about the company, see www.insitugroup.net.

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