Boeing Unmanned Combat Aircraft Drops First Weapon

A Boeing [NYSE: BA] X-45A unmanned combat aircraft dropped a 250-pound inert Small Smart Bomb Saturday at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center, Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

The Joint Unmanned Combat Air Systems (J-UCAS) X-45A technology demonstrator released the unguided weapon from its internal weapons bay at 35,000 ft. and 0.67 Mach (approximately 442 mph) over the Precision Impact Range Area in the Southern California desert.

"What an historic day for aviation!" said George Muellner, Boeing Air Force Systems Senior Vice President and General Manager. "Our team has shown the world that an autonomous unmanned combat aircraft can respond to human direction and successfully release a weapon from an internal bay. It also demonstrated the combat capability of the X-45 J-UCAS and how it will become a revolutionary force enabler capable of conducting attacks in high-threat environments."

The Boeing J-UCAS team has conducted four X-45A flight tests within the past 10 days and will continue to make aviation history when it releases a precision weapon that will attack a target at the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division Range, China Lake, Calif., in the next several weeks. Following the guided weapons release, the team will proceed to its next major milestone of demonstrating multiple-vehicle coordinated flights.

The J-UCAS X-45 program is a Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency/U.S. Air Force/U.S. Navy/Boeing effort to demonstrate the technical feasibility, military utility and operational value of an unmanned air combat system for both the Air Force and the Navy.

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