A160 Hummingbird Resumes Flight Testing as Boeing UAV

The A160 Hummingbird unmanned aerial vehicle made its first test flight as a Boeing [NYSE: BA] aircraft Friday from an airfield near Victorville, Calif.

The successful 80-minute test included both hovering and forward flight. The A160 joined Boeing's line of UAVs with the acquisition of Frontiers Systems Inc. in May.

Being developed under a DARPA contract, the A160 is an unmanned helicopter designed to fly 2,500 nautical miles with endurance in excess of 24 hours and a payload of more than 300 pounds.

"Each successful test takes us another step closer to providing an innovative UAV solution with range, endurance, payload and altitude capabilities unprecedented in the history of helicopter design," said Steve Glusman, A160 program manager for Boeing Phantom Works. "We're thrilled to get back into flight status and continue envelope expansion activities. This aircraft can change all the rules as they apply to VTOL UAV operations."

The autonomously-flown helicopter is 35 feet long with a 36-foot rotor diameter and will fly at an estimated top speed of 140 knots at ceilings of up to 30,000 feet.

The A160 will provide reconnaissance, surveillance, target acquisition, communication relay and precision re-supply.

Also, the A160's unique characteristics address current and emerging requirements of the U.S. armed forces, Department of Homeland Security, and international military and security organizations.

The objectives of the recent flight test were to expand the A160's flight envelope by operating the main rotor at different revolutions per minute. Engineers are currently analyzing the flight data to determine objectives for the next series of test flights.

Boeing Phantom Works will complete initial development of the Hummingbird and then transfer the program to Boeing Integrated Defense Systems (IDS) for further development and production. Phantom Works recently transferred the Joint Unmanned Combat Air System X-45 program to IDS.

Phantom Works is the advanced research and development unit and catalyst of innovation for the Boeing enterprise. Through its Integrated Defense Advanced Systems group, it provides leading edge systems and technology solutions to Boeing Integrated Defense Systems, one of the world's largest space and defense businesses.
Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $27 billion business that 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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