Boeing Awarded $767 Million For Joint Unmanned Combat Air Systems Capability Demonstration Program

The Boeing [NYSE: BA] Company has been awarded $767 million in funding from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to continue the X-45C portion of the Joint Unmanned Combat Air Systems (J-UCAS) demonstration program over the next five years.

The award is "a huge step forward that allows the Boeing team to build upon the tremendous success of the X-45A and deliver a revolutionary system capable of gaining rapid access to enemy battlespace and engaging sensitive and high-value targets," said Boeing Integrated Defense Systems President and CEO Jim Albaugh.

Boeing began its unmanned combat aircraft program in 1998. The following year, DARPA and the U.S. Air Force chose Boeing to build two X-45A air vehicles and a mission control station under the J-UCAS Advanced Technology Demonstration Program. Since that time, two Boeing-built X-45A's have flown 35 test missions at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center , Edwards Air Force Base, Calif. The most significant X-45A test flights in 2004 included a precision weapon drop in April, and the first unmanned, autonomous multi-vehicle flight in August under the control of a single pilot.

The J-UCAS X-45 program is a DARPA/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 the Air Force and the Navy.

Under the J-UCAS X-45C Capability Demonstration Program (CDP), Boeing will build and demonstrate three X-45C air vehicles, two mission control elements, and integrate a common operating system technology.

The first X-45C flight is scheduled in early 2007 with initiation of Operational Assessment taking place that same year. The assessment will focus on the X-45's ability to conduct suppression of enemy air defenses; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; and strike missions for the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy.

The X-45C will be 39 feet long with a 49-foot wingspan, cruise at 0.80 Mach at an altitude of 40,000 feet, carry a 4,500 pound weapon payload, and fly a combat radius of more than 1,200 nautical miles. The X-45C is designed to be a highly-survivable weapons system that will include advanced sensors and a robust communication system demonstrating advanced target detection and engagement capabilities.

During the CDP phase, the X-45C system will demonstrate interoperability with the X-47B and other manned systems, as well as integration into the national airspace.

"Our X-45 unmanned combat air system will locate and identify a threat autonomously and destroy it with precision weapons, and then stay in the area to improve battlespace awareness as a key node in the network-centric environment," said Darryl Davis, Boeing J-UCAS X-45 vice president and program manager. "It will dramatically increase the effectiveness of the global strike force."

A unit of The Boeing Company, Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses. Headquartered in St. Louis , Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $27 billion business. It provides network-centric systems solutions to its global military, government and commercial customers. It is a leading provider of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems; 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 and Department of Homeland Security; NASA's largest contractor; and a global leader in launch services.

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