Boeing X-45A Unmanned Aircraft Tests New Software on 51st Flight

Boeing [NYSE: BA] began testing its fourth block of software for the X-45A unmanned aircraft during a flight May 13 at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center, Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

Following a series of successful ground and taxi tests in April and early May, the Boeing Joint Unmanned Combat Air Systems' (J-UCAS) X-45A completed its 51st flight demonstrating that the basic command and control and flight functionality shown in the previous software block worked properly with the new software. This was the first test of the Block 4 software with the aircraft flying to approximately 15,000 feet at 0.40 Mach. The software used and tested on the X-45A may be offered as a candidate for functionality in the development of the J-UCAS Common Operating System.

"Our new block of X-45A software will demonstrate the system's ability to attack targets and autonomously react to dynamic changes in the threat environment," said David Koopersmith, Boeing J-UCAS X-45 vice president and program manager. "Block 4 will take our onboard planning and decision capability to a higher level and prepare us for the shift to the X-45Cs operational assessment by the U.S. Air Force and Navy."

The first X-45C will be completed in 2006, with flight-testing scheduled to begin in early 2007. It 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 be able to fly a combat radius of more than 1,200 nautical miles.

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 the Air Force and the Navy. Operational missions for the services may include persistent strike; penetrating electronic attack; suppression of enemy air defenses; and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

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 $30.5 billion business. It provides network-centric system 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; NASA's largest contractor; and a global leader in sustainment solutions and launch services.

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