Boeing Begins Major Upgrade of U.S. AWACS Fleet

Boeing [NYSE: BA] started installing satellite communications and air traffic management upgrades on the first of 32 U.S. Air Force AWACS aircraft.

"Enhanced satellite communications will boost the fleet's capability by providing crews with multiple channels for voice and data," said Ed Froese, vice president of Boeing Airborne Warning Systems. "This improves the AWACS system's ability to communicate with other AWACS aircraft, platforms and ground stations."

The Global Air Traffic Management upgrade permits AWACS to efficiently operate in congested airspace worldwide, especially in Europe and the East coast corridor of the U.S., by allowing the AWACS to fly in closer proximity to other aircraft. Additional enhancements include a traffic collision avoidance system, which sounds an alert and provides a message -- climb or descend -- to the AWACS flight crew in order to prevent a collision.

Retrofit of the first AWACS is scheduled to be completed in January 2006. The entire fleet will be completed by the end of 2010.

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 and Department of Home land Security; NASA's largest contractor; and a global leader in sustainment solutions and launch services.
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