Boeing Wedgetail Team Completes Major Radar Testing Milestone

Boeing [NYSE: BA] and Northrop Grumman Electronic Systems have completed ground testing of the Multi-role Electronically Scanned Array (MESA) radar aboard a 737 airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft for Australia's Project Wedgetail, clearing it for flight testing at full power.

"The testing demonstrated the radar would not interfere with the aircraft's avionics and engines and is compatible with the mission system hardware and software," said Jack Delange, 737 AEW&C integration and test manager.

Boeing also integrated the radar and Identification Friend or Foe system, allowing for simultaneous operation and more efficient targeting and data collection.

The program now will move aggressively into the development, test and evaluation phase. This includes calibrating the radar for aircraft and ground environment effects and detecting targets of opportunity such as commercial aircraft. The radar also will be tested against towed spheres, which simulate the cross section of fighter aircraft. Follow-on testing will utilize single and multiple fighter jets and surface ships.

Northrop Grumman's MESA radar is designed to provide optimal performance in range, tracking and accuracy. It can track airborne and maritime targets simultaneously and help the mission crew direct the control of fighter aircraft while continuously scanning the operational area.

Australia has purchased six 737 AEW&C aircraft. The first two will be delivered for initial operational capability in July 2007. The remaining aircraft are scheduled to be delivered by 2008.

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