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Boeing [NYSE: BA] has been awarded a \$138 million option by the U.S. Air Force to build three additional Global Positioning System (GPS) satellites under the GPS Block IIF contract.

The exercised option brings to 12 the number of Block IIF satellites Boeing is building under contract to the military's NAVSTAR GPS joint program office. Boeing expects that the first GPS Block IIF satellite, known as SV-1, will be ready for delivery in 2007.

"The award of this follow-on contract to Boeing reaffirms an enduring partnership between the Air Force and Boeing, a partnership that began more than three decades ago," said Col. Wesley Ballenger, commander of the NAVSTAR GPS Joint Program Office at the Space and Missile Systems Center in Los Angeles. "Starting with the first GPS Block I demonstration satellites and continuing through more than 40 operational systems, Boeing has been a long-standing contributor to the operation and sustainment of the GPS on-orbit constellation."

The GPS system is a space-based radio positioning system consisting of a constellation of 24 orbiting satellites. GPS provides two levels of service: a standard positioning service for general public business and recreational use and an encoded service that is primarily intended for use by the U.S. Department of Defense. GPS IIF satellites will provide enhanced navigation support for both military and civilian users and will include a new dedicated L-5 signal approved by the government for civilian aviation.

"With the recent completion of the GPS IIF integrated baseline review, we are confident that the program is on solid footing to perform to cost and schedule requirements," said Michael Gianelli, vice president of Navigation and Communication Systems for Boeing. "We also continue to look at enhancements of GPS services as part of an Air Force study contract recently awarded to Boeing for the development of the GPS III next-generation satellites."

In addition to building 12 Block IIF satellites, Boeing also is under contract to support the GPS ground segment. The value of this contract is approximately \$800 million. Boeing has more than 30 years of experience on GPS, starting with the first demonstration satellites in 1974 and continuing with the production of 43 GPS satellites. GPS was the 1992 recipient of the Robert J. Collier trophy, an annual award recognizing the greatest achievements in aeronautics and aerospace in the United States. Today, the GPS constellation continues to be an invaluable national asset for both military and civilian users.

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