

Boeing Proves B-52 'Smart Bay' Capability in Lab

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The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] has proven in a weapons integration laboratory for the first time that small-diameter bombs (SDB) can successfully be placed on a strategic rotary launcher in the bomb bay of a B-52 bomber.

Scot Oathout, Boeing program director for the B-52, said the lab development -- called a fit check of the weapons -- is a significant step in helping to increase the conventional payload of the B-52 by up to 100 percent with the potential for more with further upgrades.

"The engineering effort supports development of future 'Smart Bay' weapons for the B-52," Oathout said. "The bomb bay is under-utilized space today, and we want to use that asset. We believe that adding smart conventional weapons bay carriage provides the warfighter with a much more versatile aircraft that can support our nation's defense for years to come."

Oathout said that the Boeing engineering team performed a test that proved the B-52 can carry 32 SDBs on the Common Strategic Rotary Launcher in the bomb bay of the B-52.

Boeing engineers, Oathout said, have used company research and development time and funds to design a method to carry the SDBs in the bomb bay. The common strategic rotary launcher in the B-52 can now only hold Cold War-era nuclear weapons and converted conventional air-launched cruise missiles.

"This is an aircraft that will be supporting our warfighters for the next 40 years," he said. "The B-52 is already doing close air support. With the ability to add conventional smart bombs in the bay, just imagine the weapons and the increase of weapons to support national security missions."

The Boeing B-52 program, which is based in at Boeing's Wichita, Kans., facility, is a part of Support Systems, a business unit of Boeing Integrated Defense Systems.

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