Boeing to Build Fourth U.S. Air Force Wideband Gapfiller Satellite

The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] has received a $299.8 million U.S. Air Force contract for the production of the fourth Wideband Gapfiller Satellite (WGS). This is the first option to be exercised on the WGS Block II contract, which was finalized last month. The Block II contract is valued at $1.067 billion, if all options are exercised.

WGS-4 will be similar to the three Block I satellites Boeing already is building, but will include a radio frequency bypass capability designed to support airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms requiring additional bandwidth. The RF bypass will support data rates of up to 311 megabits per second. The 13-kilowatt WGS satellites are based on Boeing's 702 models and are designed to provide improved communications support for America's warfighters. WGS-4 is expected to launch in early 2011.

"The procurement of this fourth WGS satellite places us on a solid path to increase the capabilities of the DoD communications constellation," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Adam Mortensen, WGS Block II program manager. "The additional satellite substantially increases the tactical communications capacity in key geographic areas, and will provide a critical capability to support data relay from new unmanned aerial vehicles that are coming on line."

WGS will augment and eventually replace the Defense Satellite Communication System (DSCS) currently in orbit. One WGS satellite will provide more throughput than the entire DSCS constellation, which translates to improved effectiveness of worldwide forces and ultimately saves lives. The first WGS Block I satellite is scheduled for launch in mid-2007.

"We are very pleased that the government has exercised this contract option, which will substantially enhance the capability of the WGS constellation," said Charles Toups, vice president of Boeing Navigation and Communication Systems. "Boeing has leveraged a wealth of experience and capability for WGS, including extensive investments in the 702 satellite bus, digital signal processors and phased array antennas. These capabilities enable the tremendous capacity and operational flexibility our nation requires."

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 $30.8 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; a foremost developer of advanced concepts and technologies; 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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