Boeing ScanEagle Achieves Major Flight Milestones

Boeing [NYSE: BA] and its ScanEagle unmanned aerial system (UAS) team member Insitu, Inc., have achieved two program milestones.

First, the team recently logged the longest continuous flight of its UAS by flying a preproduction prototype Block D ScanEagle for 22 hours and eight minutes at the Boeing test range in Boardman, Ore. The team flew the test vehicle in a simulated mission profile, completing the flight with a fuel reserve.

The Block D configuration incorporates new enhancements such as a higher resolution infrared camera; an inertially-stabilized camera turret to maintain stable imaging; a custom, ultra-light Mode C transponder to deconflict airspace with other air traffic; a new video transmitter system; rover interoperability for mobile operators; in-flight fuel measurement systems, and other reliability and modularity improvements.

"These improvements are being introduced to meet warfighter requirements," said Margaret A. (Peggy) Holly, Boeing ScanEagle program manager.

Second, the ScanEagle team has logged more than 20,000 combat flight hours to date supporting U.S. Marine ground force missions in Iraq.

Since August 2004, ScanEagle has provided real-time imagery to support persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions for the Marines.

"Our feedback from the Marines during the past two and one-half years of operation has been very positive. The ScanEagle UAS is now an integrated element in their daily operations," said Roger Carleton, director, Boeing Advanced Unmanned Systems.

ScanEagle, a product of Boeing Advanced Systems' Advanced Precision Engagement and Mobility Systems in a joint effort with Insitu, was developed as a low-cost, long-endurance UAS to provide persistent ISR as well as flexible, rapid deployment for a variety of government and civilian applications.

The vehicle is mounted with either an electro-optical or infrared camera onboard. The camera's turret allows the operator to track stationary or moving targets without having to re-maneuver the UAS itself. ScanEagle is capable of flying low- and high-altitude (above 16,000 feet) stealth missions as well as operating in adverse weather conditions such as high winds and heavy rain.

The UAS is launched autonomously via a pneumatic wedge catapult launcher and flies pre-programmed or operator-initiated missions guided by GPS and an onboard flight control system. It is retrieved using Insitu's patented SkyHook™ system that uses a rope hanging from a 50-foot high pole to catch the UAS.

ScanEagle's portability enables it to be launched, operated and retrieved from close-support locations, mobile vehicles and small ships.

In addition to supporting the Marine Corps, ScanEagle is in service with the U.S. Navy performing ship-based operations.

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