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The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] has graduated its first U.S. military ScanEagle crews from its Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Training Center in Clovis, N.M.. The airmen, assigned to the U.S. Air Force 820th Security Forces Group at Moody Air Force Base, Ga., include three operators, two maintainers, a mission commander and a sensor operator.

"My team and I look forward to the start of an operational evaluation of the system to determine the best tactics for integrating ScanEagle into the mission of protecting Air Force people in a hostile environment," said Lt. Ben Worley of the 820th Security Forces Group.

The ScanEagle unmanned aerial system, developed in partnership with Insitu, Inc. of Bingen, Wash., has logged more than 30,000 combat flight hours supporting U.S. Navy and Marine Corps operations over the last two years. The new Air Force operators represent the first time the system will be directly controlled by military personnel.

"The students are leaving the training with the skills and confidence to implement a viable force protection capability for the Air Force," said Marshall Formby, director of training at the Boeing UAV Training Center. "The students have completed an intensive education in systems operation, aerodynamics, crew resource management, maintenance and tactics."

The ScanEagle system provides the user with the capability to observe targets from a safe distance and provide real-time information to the operator. Although the platform was originally developed to provide commercial fishing fleets an affordable alternative to helicopters in searching for schools of fish, Boeing partnered with Insitu to integrate ScanEagle into military operations. Due to its small size, low cost and ability to operate without a runway, the system has evolved into a valuable tool in military operations.

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