Boeing Begins Mission System Flight Testing of First Australian Wedgetail Aircraft

The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] has begun flight testing the mission system aboard the first 737 airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft for Australia's Project Wedgetail.

During an initial four-hour flight from Boeing Field in Seattle on June 6, the crew conducted a series of functional tests as part of a program to measure the mission system's impact on the aircraft's power generation capability and environmental controls, such as the liquid and air cooling systems.

The mission system includes the radar, navigation, communications and computing subsystems.

Boeing will flight test the aircraft several days a week for the next month over land and water, while the mission system is used in a manner similar to an AEW&C operational mission.

The next phase of the flight test program aboard aircraft No. 1 is scheduled for later this year when it joins aircraft No. 2 as a test bed for system-level developmental testing.

Australia has purchased six 737 airborne early warning and control aircraft. Delivery of the first two aircraft is scheduled for March 2009. The remaining four aircraft will be delivered later that year.

The 737 AEW&C, designed to provide airborne battle management capability with 10 state-of-the-art mission system consoles, is based on the Boeing Next Generation 737-700 and features 21st century avionics, navigation equipment and flight deck enhancements.

Northrop Grumman's Multi-role Electronically Scanned Array (MESA) radar is the critical sensor aboard the 737 AEW&C. The MESA array is designed to provide optimal performance in range, tracking and accuracy. The radar is able to track airborne and maritime targets simultaneously.

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