

Boeing Completes First Flight of A160T Hummingbird Unmanned Helicopter

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The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] successfully completed the first flight of the A160T Hummingbird unmanned rotorcraft June 15 from an airfield near Victorville, Calif.

The A160T, a turbine-powered version of the innovative piston-powered A160 helicopter, features unmatched range, endurance, payload and altitude for an unmanned rotorcraft.

"Today's Hover-In-Ground Effect flight is our first step in providing the warfighter the key element of our approach to providing persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance coverage that only an unmanned helicopter of this type can provide," said Jim Martin, Boeing Advanced Systems A160 program manager, after the flight.

During the 12-minute hover flight to verify vehicle and subsystem operation, the A160T met all test objectives and collected extensive flight control, propulsion and subsystem operation data.

The test marked the 37th flight overall for the A160 program and the first in a series of flights that will demonstrate endurance levels greater than 18 hours. The aircraft used during the tests is the first of 10 A160Ts Boeing Advanced Systems is building for the Defense Advanced Projects Research Agency and the U.S. Special Operations Command.

The Hummingbird features a unique optimum speed rotor technology that significantly improves overall performance efficiency by adjusting the rotor system's revolutions per minute at different altitudes, gross weights and cruise speeds. The autonomous unmanned aircraft, measuring 35 feet long with a 36-foot rotor diameter, eventually will fly more than 140 knots with a ceiling of 25,000 to 30,000 ft. (high hover capability up to 15,000 ft.) for up to 20 hours. Operational A160Ts will be capable of persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; target acquisition; direct action; communication relay and precision re-supply missions.

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