Boeing Selected to Build Instrument Unit Avionics for NASA's Ares I Crew Launch Vehicle

The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] has been awarded an initial NASA contract valued at approximately $265 million to produce the Ares I crew launch vehicle's instrument unit avionics (IUA). The award follows Boeing's selection as the Ares I upper stage production contractor in August.

The IUA provides the guidance, navigation and control hardware for the new Ares I crew launch vehicle, serving as the "brains" behind the rocket's ascent. The Ares I launches the Orion crew exploration vehicle, which will join other elements of NASA's Constellation program to help propel astronauts to the moon by 2020.

"We are ready to use Boeing's knowledge, processes and tools to NASA's advantage and are committed to bringing the best of Boeing and the best of industry to ensure success," said Roger A. Krone, Boeing Network and Space Systems president. "We will apply proven practices and expertise from several Boeing programs, including EA-18G Growler, Future Combat Systems and Ground-based Midcourse Defense, among others."

Boeing will produce three IUA flight test units and six production units, with an option to produce four additional units per year from 2014 to 2016.

Under the contract, Boeing will employ up to 100 technical personnel to support NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala. The center will lead the design for the upper stage and instrument unit avionics for Ares I, while Boeing provides production and engineering support. Boeing also expects to employ up to 20 production workers at NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans, La., where the IUA will be added to the upper stage.

"Our team, led by Dwight Potter, worked hard to put together an attractive offer that provides high value to NASA and the country," said former astronaut and Boeing Space Exploration Vice President and General Manager Brewster Shaw. "We're honored to be a part of taking America back to the moon."

Boeing's strong supplier network will be key to the success of Ares I IUA, said Dwight Potter, Boeing Ares I IUA program manager

"NASA will reap the cost and schedule benefits of maintaining broad competition for avionics boxes," said Potter. "Boeing also will apply industry-leading lean manufacturing processes throughout the supply chain to produce the Ares I IUA and upper stage."

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses specializing in innovative and capabilities-driven customer solutions. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $32.4 billion business with 72,000 employees worldwide.
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