Boeing to Demo Net-Centric Upgrade on AWACS Aircraft at Empire Challenge

ST. LOUIS, July 08, 2008 -- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] has integrated network-centric capabilities into two operational U.S. Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft for a demonstration at Empire Challenge 2008, a joint military exercise being held July 7 through Aug. 1 in China Lake, Calif. The modifications were completed in early June, followed by operator training and a pre-exercise test flight.

The two AWACS aircraft, part of the U.S. Air Force's fleet of 32, are assigned to the 552nd Air Control Wing at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla.

The network-centric modifications allow greater use of AWACS mission data, better access to external Web services data and an enhanced suite of battle-management tools. All are enabled by increased processing capability and modern mission-computing software.

The modifications include the high-speed Tactical Targeting Network Technology system, which will connect the aircraft to other assets throughout the airborne battlespace. The aircraft also will connect with battle managers on the ground through a longer range Beyond Line-of-Sight system called Inmarsat.

In addition to their standard system display, the AWACS operators at Empire Challenge will have a second display accessible from their existing keyboard. This auxiliary display offers network-access services such as chat, tracking of friendly forces, Air Tasking Order updates and the status of time-critical targets. The display also will show air tracks and weapon-target pairing using the new Block 40/45 Primary AWACS Display -- giving senior military leaders and other decision makers a preview of the 40/45 mission system upgrade that is now nearing the end of its System Development and Demonstration phase for the Air Force. Boeing is the upgrade's prime integrator.

The AWACS 40/45 upgrade will enable increased mission effectiveness for the air battle management operators onboard as they collaborate with airborne fighters and with ground controllers. This increased capability is one of the key objectives to be evaluated during Empire Challenge 2008.

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