Boeing Completes Mission System Flight Testing for US AWACS Block 40/45 Upgrade

SEATTLE, Sept. 10, 2008 -- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] has completed mission system flight testing for Block 40/45, the largest upgrade in the history of the U.S. E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) fleet.

During a 15-month period from April 2007 to July 2008, Boeing and the Air Force's Joint Test Force flew missions aboard Test System 3, an AWACS test aircraft, to complete the System Design and Development program.

"Test data indicate the Block 40/45 system meets or exceeds all its key performance parameters and technical performance requirements," said Stu Oliason, 40/45 System Design and Development program manager for Boeing.

"The success of this flight-test program is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of hundreds of 40/45 employees. We're all very excited about bringing this new capability to the warfighter," Oliason added.

Under the Block 40/45 program, the aircraft's legacy mainframe computer has been replaced with an open system architecture using network servers in a user-friendly operating environment. The vastly improved computing power helps automate what is currently a manually intensive workload for the AWACS operators.

A multisource integration capability automates the process of detecting and identifying targets to provide a single-target/single-track resolution. Outgoing tasking messages are automatically prioritized via a data link infrastructure. Features are displayed to operators on the Primary AWACS Display in a user-friendly, intuitive manner. The numerous buttons and switches around the current operator console have been replaced with point-and-click simplicity and a display featuring drop-down menus and rapid access to all required information. This functionality shortens the time required to execute either combat or search-and-rescue missions.

The cumulative benefit of the Block 40/45 upgrade is to increase overall mission effectiveness for AWACS operators in the 21st-century battlespace, while boosting the reliability of the mission system and lowering life-cycle costs. The baseline capability is designed to allow future upgrades.

The Air Force is expected to make a decision on the next step -- a Block 40/45 production contract -- by the end of this year.

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