Boeing B-52 With Combat Network Communications Upgrade Makes 1st Flight

WICHITA, Kan., May 22, 2009– Boeing [NYSE: BA] today announced the successful first flight of a B-52 Stratofortress upgraded with Combat Network Communications Technology (CONECT), a modification that equips the legendary B-52 with 21st-century situational awareness and mission flexibility. The aircraft made the 3.5-hour flight on May 21 from the Boeing Integrated Defense Systems facility in Wichita.

“The CONECT modification gives our warfighters equal footing in a network-centric battlefield,” said Scot Oathout, Boeing director of B-52 Programs. “It is fitting that this very airplane was delivered from Boeing Wichita in 1960 as the most advanced aircraft in the U.S. Air Force and now it’s on track to be delivered from Wichita again, transformed with a new capability for today’s mission.”

The CONECT modification installs a digital communications infrastructure in the B-52 that allows the aircraft to communicate with the Air Force’s digital communications network and tie in with Air Force command and control centers, ground forces and other platforms. This first aircraft will leave Wichita in June to go into flight test at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif. All 76 aircraft in the fleet will receive the CONECT modification after the flight test program is complete.

Boeing employees celebrated the achievement today at a ceremony that also included Air Force staff, state and local elected officials, and representatives from the city of Wichita.

"We are excited to be taking the CONECT program into the flight test phase," said Lt. Col. Darren Cochran of the Air Force's 651st Aeronautical Systems Squadron, which is responsible for the development, acquisition, fielding, modernization and sustainment of the B-52. "I want to personally thank the men and women of The Boeing Company for their hard work and dedication to the B-52 in the past, today and in the future. Together, we continue to transform this platform for today's fight."

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, and the world’s largest and most versatile manufacturer of military aircraft. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $32 billion business with 70,000 employees worldwide.

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