Boeing B-1 Upgraded With Fully Integrated Data Link Completes 1st Flight

LONG BEACH, Calif., Aug. 13, 2009 -- Boeing [NYSE: BA] on July 29 successfully completed the first flight of a B-1 bomber upgraded with the Fully Integrated Data Link (FIDL). This upgrade includes new processors, color displays and communications architecture, enhancing B-1 crews' situational awareness and communications capability. The U.S. Air Force 419th Test Squadron conducted the flight from Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

The objective of the FIDL development program is to enhance the B-1 bomber by integrating beyond line-of-sight and line-of-sight data links. The data links reduce crew workload by dynamically re-tasking missions, eliminating the need for steps such as manual entry of weapons data for targeting.

In addition to the cockpit upgrades, the modification also improves and more tightly integrates the aft crew stations by replacing displays and associated hardware that were installed during aircraft production in the early 1980s. Additional upgrades include new open-architecture processors, mass-storage capability and an Ethernet network to integrate the aircraft's systems.

Boeing personnel at Edwards Air Force Base have been modifying the test aircraft over the past year. B-1 program employees at Edwards, at the Boeing facility in Long Beach and in other locations developed and integrated the new system's hardware and software.

"Our team worked closely with the Air Force and many other programs throughout Boeing as we performed independent reviews of product designs and gained valuable insight from employees performing similar development tasks," said Mahesh Reddy, Boeing B-1 program manager. "This cross-company teamwork led to our successful first flight, which brings us one step closer to completing this major B-1 upgrade for our customer."

Flight testing will continue through 2010. The Air Force is expected to award a contract in November 2010 for the production of FIDL installation kits for the service's entire B-1 fleet.

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