Boeing B-1 With FIDL Avionics Upgrade Completes 1st Phase of Flight Test

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif., Dec. 18, 2009-- Boeing [NYSE: BA] has successfully completed the first phase of flight test for a B-1 bomber upgraded with new digital avionics. The B-1 Fully Integrated Data Link (FIDL) flight test plan for Phase 1 concluded Oct. 16; it included nine sorties performed by the U.S. Air Force at Edwards Air Force Base.

"This upgrade replaces 25-year-old avionics processing, displays and keyboards," said Eric Vanderslice, B-1 FIDL program manager for Boeing. "Those old systems have very limited functionality. It also changes the configuration of the limited display space that helps the crew perform the aircraft's mission. We are going from bulky cathode-ray-tube screens to higher-functioning flat-panel displays, giving crews more situational awareness and more space."

Phase 1 included observations of how the crew acclimated to the new configuration; temperature and vibration tests on the new hardware; and functionality tests of all the display-related software upgrades, including the new moving maps. An 8-inch by 10-inch flat-panel display shows a picture of the terrain below that changes as the aircraft moves, much like a GPS system does in a car. B-1 crews will enter their destination and flight path before departure in order for the moving map to provide a continuously updated display of the route.

Now that Phase 1 testing is complete, the B-1 aircraft will go to Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., for programmed depot maintenance. The remaining software flight-test objectives (emphasizing data link functionality) will be performed during Phase 2, which is scheduled to begin at Edwards in April 2010 and run for 10 months. 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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