Boeing to Demonstrate Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Cooperative Control Technologies for U.S. Air Force

ST. LOUIS, June 10 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- The Boeing Company (NYSE: BA) has received a three-year, $9.8 million contract from the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory to further develop and demonstrate technologies that will enable multiple small unmanned aerial vehicles to coordinate with each other and a manned airborne control station to more safely and effectively carry out intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions.

The Foxhunt Multi-Small Unmanned Aerial System Cooperative Control Demonstration will leverage Boeing's networked systems expertise and technology advancements to directly support an emerging and challenging U.S. Air Force need.

"The focus of the Foxhunt program is the airborne control of a varied mix of unmanned aerial vehicles," said Patrick Stokes of Boeing Research & Technology, the company's advanced, central research, technology and innovation organization, who will manage the research effort. "It's part of a grander vision outlined by the Air Force Research Laboratory to include the air launch, command-and-control and airborne recovery of unmanned aerial systems – all from an airborne mothership."

Stokes said the unmanned aerial systems are intended to be an extension of the manned mothership's sensor and weapon suites, improving situational awareness and intelligence, as well as surveillance and reconnaissance reach, allowing for safer stand-off distances.

The team working on this effort includes researchers from the Boeing Research & Technology and Boeing Test & Evaluation groups of Boeing's Engineering, Operations & Technology organization; Boeing Defense, Space & Security's Phantom Works organization; and Insitu, a wholly owned independent Boeing subsidiary. Jonathan How, a renowned researcher from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the area of unmanned aerial vehicle cooperative planning, also is on the team.

"This research project is a good fit within Boeing's overall research-and-technology strategy," said Jim Paunicka, a Boeing Technical Fellow and the program's principal investigator. "It supports research and technology roadmaps in many Boeing programs, helping to further the development of technologies involving airborne communications and networking, unmanned aerial systems, control station architecture, multi-mission planning, and command-and-control."

Boeing Research & Technology collaborates with Boeing business units, as well as with external customers and suppliers, universities, and other research-and-development agencies, to provide a broad base of innovative and affordable technologies not only for developing future aerospace systems and services but also for improving current ones.

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