

Boeing Flight Demonstrates Narrowband Communications Relay on ScanEagle

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SEATTLE, July 20, 2010 -- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] and its subsidiary Insitu Inc. announced today that they successfully demonstrated a high-performance Narrowband Relay communications system aboard a ScanEagle unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in June. The relay was designed to meet the needs of small distributed forces operating in areas where Line of Sight (LOS) communications would not normally be possible.

The U.S. Defense Department has widely deployed handheld narrowband radios as the primary method of communications among small, distributed forces. However, these radios are limited in range and cannot communicate where the radios do not have a direct path to one another. The Boeing-developed Narrowband Relay, deployed aboard a small UAV, will provide a dramatically longer range and LOS capability over hills and buildings.

"This technology can make a dramatic difference in providing key communications capabilities to warfighters operating in geographically challenging environments around the world," said Nancy-Kim Yun, director, Integrated Shipboard Systems, Boeing Network and Tactical Systems (N&TS). "Our Payloads team has demonstrated the best of Boeing – they took on a challenge and found a solution that is easy to implement and cost-effective for potential customers."

To demonstrate the capability, two Thales PRC-148 JEM-compatible radios were driven more than 1,100 miles around central Washington state and northern Oregon, an area that has geography similar to the terrain in Afghanistan – hilly, with many obstacles preventing direct radio contact. As a ScanEagle UAV, outfitted with the Narrowband Relay, flew above the Boeing Boardman, Ore., facility, testers were able to use the relay to communicate with the radios.

"This flight demonstration was the culmination of a number of laboratory- and land-based tests, in many environments and with other radios, including PSC-5, PRC-117, and PRC-152," said Dick Paquette, Boeing Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence [C4I] Payloads Program manager. "This capability expands on our previous in-flight demonstrations that integrated C4I payloads and UAVs in support of the warfighter."

The U.S. Special Operations Command, the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, and the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command have expressed interest in the results of the Boeing-funded demonstration.


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