Boeing to Demonstrate NATO AWACS Control of Unmanned Airborne System at Empire Challenge

SEATTLE, July 21, 2010 -- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] will demonstrate control of the ScanEagle unmanned airborne system (UAS) by a NATO Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft during Empire Challenge 2010. This annual demonstration of joint and coalition intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance interoperability is sponsored by the U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence. Empire Challenge, hosted by the U.S. Joint Forces Command, will take place from July 26 to Aug. 13 at Fort Huachuca, Ariz.

Boeing has tested unmanned vehicles and AWACS in previous Empire Challenge demonstrations, but this will be the first time the company demonstrates full control of an unmanned aircraft by an airborne command and control (C2) platform during an operational scenario. ScanEagle is built by Insitu Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Boeing.

The scenario involves an antipiracy operation in which the NATO AWACS aircraft detects suspicious activity and directs ScanEagle to fly to a certain location and keep track of a suspect vessel -- a truck representing a pirate ship -- while sending real-time video back to the AWACS. The AWACS aircraft, in collaboration with the Combined Air Operations Center, will determine whether the vessel is a threat and direct other coalition assets to respond appropriately. The AWACS aircraft will be equipped with a Tactical Common Data Link system that will relay commands to ScanEagle from an onboard operator.

"This demonstration is an example of how linking NATO AWACS to new data sources, such as chat rooms and unmanned vehicles, can support evolving Air Battle Management tasks," said Col. Greg Clark of NATO Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C) Force Command. "Operators are recognizing the significant advantages that unmanned vehicles provide to access new information-sharing methods to rapidly improve the use of all operational assets."

"ScanEagle will enhance the AWACS advantage of seeing from long distances at high altitude by allowing the manned aircraft to also observe what's happening closer to the ground," said Jake Howitt, director of AWACS Programs for Boeing. "AWACS will use the information from ScanEagle and data from its own sensors to produce faster, more accurate and actionable intelligence in response to threats."

Boeing has been testing UAS control from C2 platforms since 2006, including a 2009 demonstration using an AEW&C aircraft to control multiple ScanEagles via satellite communications and other similar communications channels.

The Empire Challenge 2010 demonstration will pave the way to enable any airborne C2 platform to control unmanned vehicles -- such as ScanEagle and the larger ScanEagle Compressed Carriage -- as remote sensors without a major modification to the controlling aircraft.

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