Boeing to Study Commercial Space Capabilities for Military Use

EL SEGUNDO, Calif., Feb. 10, 2011 -- Boeing [NYSE: BA] has received a $900,000 study contract from the Military Satellite Communications (MILSATCOM) Systems Directorate of the U.S. Air Force Space and Missile Systems Center. Under the agreement, Boeing will explore ways to modify existing commercial satellite capabilities to meet MILSATCOM needs.

Boeing will focus on communications-on-the-move missions as well as connectivity for low-altitude airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (AISR) platforms operating on Ka-band frequencies. Boeing also will make recommendations about innovative and feasible acquisition alternatives, which will include ways to apply commercial satellite procurement practices to the military acquisition process. The study recommendations are scheduled to be delivered to the Air Force in July.

"Boeing's vision for the future MILSATCOM architecture is one that includes core owned assets such as Wideband Global SATCOM, plus complementary hosted or free-flier payloads," said Craig Cooning, vice president and general manager of Boeing Space & Intelligence Systems. "We expect to play a large role in increasing the United States' MILSATCOM assets."

Hosted payloads are one of Boeing’s key recommendations for MILSATCOM augmentation. They are additional payloads added to a commercial satellite for the purpose of being leased to a government user. One of the primary benefits of a hosted payload is the speed of delivery -- a commercial satellite carrying a hosted payload can generally be delivered in less than three years.

"Boeing received orders for five hosted payloads in the past 18 months," Cooning said. "These are a win-win for the military, which needs the bandwidth, and the commercial SATCOM service providers, which benefit from a secondary revenue stream. Our partnership with commercial satellite industry and our legacy of government support will result in many creative approaches to assisting this country's men and women in uniform."

Boeing's history of hosted payloads dates back to 1993, when the company helped the U.S. Navy upgrade its ultra-high frequency (UHF) satellite communications system by augmenting several vehicles to host an extremely high frequency (EHF) payload as well as the first military Ka-band payload, which has provided Global Broadcast Service capabilities since 1998.

In July 2009, Boeing announced a four-satellite contract from Intelsat; two of these satellites will incorporate hosted payloads in the UHF band. In August 2010, Inmarsat ordered three Boeing 702HP satellites, each of which will carry a hosted payload operating in the military Ka-band. Boeing is also pursuing opportunities to provide tactical EHF and X-band hosted payloads.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Defense, Space & Security is one of the world's largest defense, space and security businesses specializing in innovative and capabilities-driven customer solutions, and the world's largest and most versatile manufacturer of military aircraft. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Defense, Space & Security is a $32 billion business with 66,000 employees worldwide. Follow us on Twitter: @BoeingDefense.

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