Boeing FAB-T Satellite Communications Program Making Progress

Hardware qualification tests 90 percent complete

RC-135 flight test demos low-data-rate terminal communications

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif., July 18, 2011 -- Boeing [NYSE: BA] today announced that the hardware and software development of its Family of Advanced Beyond Line-of-Sight Terminals (FAB-T) program is nearly complete. Boeing is working closely with the U.S. Air Force to ensure that the FAB-T program can provide protected wideband satellite communications in support of command and control of U.S. nuclear forces.

“The FAB-T program continues to make measurable progress against its planned baseline,” said John Lunardi, Boeing FAB-T vice president and program director. “In April, we integrated the third-generation FAB-T airborne terminal on a test version of the RC-135 Rivet Joint aircraft and successfully demonstrated low-data-rate terminal communications over the air, in flight. The terminal is the first FAB-T user platform to be integrated, and there’s nothing like testing the system in flight to show the program’s continuing success.”

The program, which is in the engineering, manufacturing and development phase, has completed 90 percent of hardware qualification testing, 97 percent of all system software through-code and unit testing, and approximately 30 percent of systems integration and test. Boeing has conducted platform and payload integration testing through over-the-air low-data-rate tests and risk-reduction flight tests. The RC-135 flight test was the second in a series of airborne terminal tests, following a 2009 test with the N404 Massachusetts Institute of Technology/Lincoln Labs test aircraft.

Boeing is working toward a low-rate initial production contract for the Nuclear Command and Control Network Communications System and completing qualification of the third-generation hardware (Block 8) and development of the system’s high-data-rate waveform software.

“Our innovative software development team is working with the Air Force to demonstrate incremental capabilities using FAB-T’s advanced wideband terminal hardware,” said Lunardi. “We’re building and testing each new communications capability for this vital nuclear response mission.”

Boeing will provide the Air Force with a fully capable, affordable system that supports the existing Military Strategic, Tactical and Relay (Milstar) satellite constellation and its ground and airborne command-and-control terminals. The company also will provide terminals for the new AEHF satellite constellation under development in a separate program. The FAB-T products include software-defined radios capable of protected communications, antennas, and associated user interface hardware and software that will provide the government with a survivable and powerful system.

The Boeing FAB-T industry team’s key milestones include the following:

- Boeing conducted multiple intersegment tests in 2010 between a FAB-T Terminal and an AEHF satellite vehicle payload, demonstrating interoperability and compatibility for air, ground and satellite communications.
- In January, the Air Force successfully demonstrated over-the-air, low-data-rate communication between an orbiting Milstar satellite and the more advanced, third-generation (Block 8) FAB-T unit.
- In April, the FAB-T team completed a successful test flight aboard an RC-135 Rivet Joint aircraft, demonstrating in-flight over-the-air communications through an orbiting Milstar satellite to a ground terminal. Aircraft terminal integration and checkout, ground testing, taxi and flight testing further demonstrated the maturity of the FAB-T system.

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