Boeing Communications Relay Links Radios with Multiple Unmanned Platforms

Team uses ScanEagle and Puma UAVs in multiservice exercise

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif., Aug. 16, 2011 -- Boeing [NYSE: BA] today announced it has successfully demonstrated the company's newest narrowband communications relay aboard two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) -- an Insitu ScanEagle and a portable AeroVironment [NASDAQ: AVAV] Puma All Environment (AE).

The relay was designed to meet the needs of small distributed forces operating in areas where line-of-sight communications are not possible. It is the longest-range narrowband relay successfully flown in the Puma AE and ScanEagle platforms to date.

During the multiservice demonstrations, held in California in May and this month, UAVs flew at a variety of altitudes while linking handheld military radios dispersed over mountainous regions. The tests confirmed the relay's performance and versatility. Using the two UAV platforms extended the radios' range tenfold.

"Military forces participating in the demonstration confirmed the urgent need to extend the range of thousands of deployed radios by using a UAV fleet that already exists," said Dick Paquette, Boeing C4I Payloads program manager. "Boeing designs, builds and integrates small UAV payload systems for a variety of missions, and while this exercise focused on military situations, these relays can be used for any situation in which teams need to communicate over a hilly or mountainous area, such as search-and-rescue missions."

Boeing designed the new relay to maximize the functionality of the aircraft's existing capabilities. The relay also meets the weight, space, and power limitations of small UAVs, and can be operated in environments where electromagnetic interference may be an issue. The relay is currently fielded in theater and undergoing additional demonstrations.

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