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US Air Force contract authorizes start of work on Sustainment Block 16A

OKLAHOMA CITY, Oct. 31, 2011 -- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] has received a follow-on contract from the U.S. Air Force for additional upgrades of the B-1 bomber fleet's avionics software.

The \$57 million contract continues a software-sustainment program that has updated and improved the B-1's sustainability and operational capabilities since the aircraft entered service in 1989. Usually, one avionics software block is in development while another is in test and a third is fielded on the fleet of 66 B-1s. This new agreement authorizes Boeing to start work on Sustainment Block 16A (SB 16A).

SB 16A includes changes to the aircraft's navigation, weapon delivery, radar, diagnostics, electrical multiplexing, communication/navigation management system software, and controls and displays. Design and development work will begin immediately.

"The B-1 continues to be used daily in combat operations," said Rick Greenwell, B-1 program director for Boeing. "Keeping the platform relevant and ready is more important now than ever. These annual software block upgrades enhance the sustainability of the B-1s and provide needed capabilities that aid this nation's defenders."

SB 16A will further improve the B-1 crew's situational awareness, using the new color cockpit displays, data link, and sensor capabilities added by recently awarded production contract programs. The multi-mission B-1 has been employing a large mixed payload of precision munitions in combat support of coalition troops. Its low radar cross-section, variable-geometry wings, advanced avionics, and afterburning engines combine to provide long range, maneuverability, high speed and survivability.

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