Boeing Opens 1st System Integration Lab for KC-46 Tanker Program

KC-46 Tanker risk-reduction facility opens 3 weeks early

Boeing remains on plan to deliver 18 KC-46 Tankers by 2017

SEATTLE, Oct. 31, 2012 -- Boeing [NYSE: BA] has opened the first KC-46 Tanker System Integration Laboratory (SIL) to support testing and reduce risk in the development of the U.S. Air Force's next-generation aerial refueling tanker.

"Opening this lab says a lot about Boeing's commitment to executing on this contract," said Maj. Gen. John Thompson, Air Force Tanker Program Executive Officer and KC-46 Program Director. "My congratulations to the entire team."

The lab, known as "SIL 0," opened on Sept. 12 -- three weeks ahead of schedule -- at Boeing Field in Seattle. It will be used to test commercial avionics and software for integration into the KC-46A Tanker. Three more SILs will open at Boeing Field and a fifth will open in Everett, Wash., by the end of 2013.

"Our five System Integration Labs will help keep us on track to deliver the first 18 KC-46A Tankers by 2017," said Maureen Dougherty, KC-46 vice president and program manager. "Accelerating system integration will drive out issues prior to flight testing and reduce risks to our schedule."

"The integration and test phase of the KC-46 program will draw on industry-leading expertise from across Boeing," said Dennis O'Donoghue, vice president, Boeing Test & Evaluation. "We have a strong and experienced team with an outstanding history of testing derivative aircraft."

Boeing Field also is home to the program's Boom Assembly Center, which opened on Oct. 16, and the Finishing Center, scheduled to open in late 2013, where military hardware and software will be installed onto the commercial 767 airframe on which the tanker is based.

Boeing is currently executing the KC-46 Engineering, Manufacturing and Design contract, which calls for the delivery of 18 combat-ready aerial refueling aircraft by 2017. The company anticipates building 179 KC-46A Tankers to support the U.S. Air Force requirement to replace its aging fleet of KC-135 tankers. The program remains on track for its next milestone, a Critical Design Review that will take place in mid-2013.

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Contact:

Jerry Drelling
KC-46 Tanker Program
Office: 425-266-4924
Mobile: 714-318-7594
jerry.a.drelling@boeing.com