Boeing KC-46A Tanker for U.S. Air Force Completes First Flight

Newest aircraft moves closer to delivery after airborne operational checks

EVERETT, Wash., Dec. 5, 2017 – The first Boeing [NYSE: BA] KC-46A tanker that will be delivered to the U.S. Air Force next year successfully completed its first flight and airborne tests today, taking off from Paine Field at 10:32 a.m. PST and landing approximately three-and-one-half hours later.

“Today’s flight is another milestone for the Air Force/Boeing team and helps move us closer to delivering operational aircraft to the warfighter,” said Col. John Newberry, U.S. Air Force KC-46 System program manager.

During the flight, Boeing test pilots took the tanker to a maximum altitude of 39,000 feet and performed operational checks on engines, flight controls and environmental systems as part of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-approved flight profile. Prior to subsequent flights, the team will conduct a post-flight inspection and calibrate instrumentation.

“We’re very proud of this aircraft and the state-of-the-art capabilities it will bring to the Air Force,” said Mike Gibbons, Boeing KC-46A tanker vice president and program manager. “We still have some tough work ahead of us, including completing our FAA certification activities, but the team is committed to ensure that upon delivery, this tanker will be everything our customer expects and more.”

The newest tanker is the KC-46 program’s seventh aircraft to fly to date.The previous six are being used for testing and certification and to date have completed 2,200 flight hours and more than 1,600 “contacts” during refueling flights with F-16, F/A-18, AV-8B, C-17, A-10, KC-10 and KC-46 aircraft.

The KC-46, derived from Boeing’s commercial 767 airframe, is built in the company’s Everett facility. Boeing is currently on contract for the first 34 of an expected 179 tankers for the U.S. Air Force.

The KC-46A is a multirole tanker that can refuel all allied and coalition military aircraft compatible with international aerial refueling procedures and can carry passengers, cargo and patients.

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