Boeing-built X-37B Begins Advanced Space Maneuvering

- 10 months into its 7th mission, the Orbital Test Vehicle (OTV-7) continues to set the pace of technology demonstrations in space.

- Upcoming aerobraking will expand the United States Space Force's knowledge of maneuvering between orbits with minimal fuel usage.

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, Fla, Oct.10, 2024 — The Boeing [NYSE: BA]-built X-37B will soon perform a series of advanced aerobraking maneuvers, taking the dynamic spaceplane from a Highly Elliptical Orbit (HEO), where it's been operating since December 2023, and lowering its altitude using minimal fuel.

This will be the first time Boeing, the United States Space Force (USSF) and the X-37B attempt to accomplish this novel demonstration.

"Space is a vast and unforgiving environment where testing technologies is critical to the success of future endeavors," said Michelle Parker, vice president of Boeing's Space Mission Systems. "There is no other space platform as capable, flexible and maneuverable as the X-37B, and its next demonstration will be another proof point that this test vehicle sets the pace of innovation."

During aerobraking, the X-37B will use the drag of Earth's atmosphere to slow it down, reducing the vehicle's energy and changing the orbit while expending minimal fuel. The Service Module disposal will be conducted in accordance with established standards for space debris mitigation, and the X-37B's orbit change will occur in a safe and responsible manner. Once aerobraking is complete, the X-37B will resume its test and experimentation objectives.

"This first-of-a kind maneuver from the X-37B is an incredibly important milestone for the United States Space Force as we seek to expand our aptitude and ability to perform in this challenging domain," said Gen. Chance Saltzman, Chief of Space Operations.

The program will leverage six successful missions of safely operating the X-37B around Earth during this next demonstration. Boeing brings decades of lessons learned from operating other spacecraft in a variety of orbits, from the Apollo missions, the Space Shuttle Program, and hundreds of government and commercial satellites.

With every mission, X-37B innovates and breaks new records. Watch to learn more here.

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Contact:
Zeyad Maasarani
Boeing Communications
+1- 562-400-5533
zeyad.maasarani@boeing.com

Boeing Media Relations
media@boeing.com