Lockheed Martin Successfully Tests Signals Intelligence Capability And Improved Wing Design On Desert Hawk III Unmanned Aircraft System

Lockheed Martin has successfully completed flight testing of a new signals intelligence (SIGINT) payload and a next generation wing design that will provide enhanced capabilities for the company's small Desert Hawk III (DHIII) Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS).

Lockheed Martin's current DHIII is an open architecture system that consists of three key components: a light-weight, hand-launched, rugged air vehicle with a number of snap-on payloads (Plug and Playloads(TM)); a portable ground station; and a remote video terminal. The air vehicle's quiet operation and 360-degree optical turret provides the war fighter with stealthy, autonomous intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. The system also includes programmable terrain avoidance and dynamic flight re-tasking options for the operator. The British Army has used DHIII extensively in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

The recent DHIII flight tests mark the first time a SIGINT payload has successfully flown onboard a small UAS platform. The new payload option will significantly expand the DHIII's surveillance capabilities by adding the ability to detect and locate sources of radio frequency emissions. The DHIII's new wing design improves the air vehicle's flight envelope and lift capacity for operations at higher altitudes, in high-wind conditions and in extreme temperature environments. The design change also reduces the minimum take-off and landing speed requirement for the warfighter, providing easier launches and recoveries in difficult terrain and environments.

Flight testing of the new payload and wing design was conducted at the California National Guard's Camp Roberts and the Minnesota National Guard's Camp Ripley in April 2009. Lockheed Martin anticipates that these new enhancements to the DHIII will become operational capabilities later this year.

"We are committed to providing new capabilities that vastly improve situational awareness and force protection," said John Nikolai, director of Electronic Products & Logistics at Lockheed Martin's Tactical Systems business. "We are proud of the flexibility that DHIII continues to demonstrate by enabling low-risk and rapid insertion of critical ISR capabilities."

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 146,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2008 sales of $42.7 billion.

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