

It's comin' togeth



First P-8A assembly complete. Next step: IDS

By CHICK RAMEY

History's in the making on "Line 3" at the Boeing Commercial Airplanes factory in Renton, Wash. And the Boeing employees, military representatives, industry partners, suppliers and others who work there or have visited there know it.

It's the place where the U.S. Navy's newest military aircraft, the P-8A Poseidon, is coming together. The sense of history in the making partly stems from Poseidon's role as the Navy's first new maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft in 30 years. It's also historic because the technically complex military derivative leverages the in-line manufacturing efficiencies of Commercial Airplanes' production system that supplies Next-Generation 737s to commercial airlines.

In July, the first P-8A test aircraft reached the end of the line, so to speak, when it achieved "factory complete" status and workers unhooked it from the moving assembly line.

"We're proud to have completed final assembly on the first P-8A Poseidon," said Mo Yahyavi, Boeing vice president and P-8 program manager for BCA. "Our objective on the P-8 program is to provide the Navy with the world's most advanced maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft. Working as one team will enable us to do just that. We're ready to hand off the first airplane so our Integrated Defense Systems teammates can complete systems integration, functional checks and deliver Poseidon to our U.S. Navy customer on time."

Following delivery to IDS, the airworthiness test aircraft will undergo calibration of its flight-test instrumentation prior to flying to nearby Boeing Field in Seattle for systems integration and additional testing early next year.

Bob Feldmann, Boeing vice president and P-8 program manager for IDS, said the P-8A team has done a terrific job of meeting all build milestones on schedule.

"Program milestones both big and small are met daily, thanks to our outstanding Poseidon industry team," Feldmann said. "Since the start of final assembly in late March, the team has checked off on-schedule assembly milestones including wing-to-body join and the start of the moving line in May and the completion of full-power testing, or 'power on,' and engine installation in June."

(For more on the start of final assembly, see Page 12 of the May 2008 edition of *Boeing Frontiers*.)

After the first P-8A rolled out of the factory, workers still had plenty to do supporting preflight activities next door at Renton Field. And just days after factory completion of the first airplane, Boeing's team welcomed the arrival of the second P-8A fuselage from Spirit AeroSystems. Boeing now will begin final assembly of the program's static-test aircraft.

Overall, Boeing is building five test aircraft, three flight-test and two for ground-based tests, as part of the System Development and Demonstration contract signed with the Navy. The first aircraft will be delivered to the Navy in 2009. The Navy plans to purchase 108 P-8As to replace its fleet of Lockheed P-3C aircraft. ■

charles.b.ramey@boeing.com

Photo:

Boeing's first P-8A Poseidon is shown on 737 Final Assembly Line 3 last month prior to rolling out of the Boeing Commercial Airplanes factory in Renton, Wash. Following completion of final assembly, the aircraft began preflight engine runs and other functional tests at Renton Field. JIM ANDERSON PHOTO