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Northrop Grumman's Next-Generation Fire Scout to Beef Up Avionics Protection

SOMERSET, Ky. – Jan. 29, 2013 – Northrop Grumman Corporation (NYSE: NOC) received the first protective cage for its next-generation MQ-8C Fire Scout unmanned helicopter that will store and shield the aircraft's critical electronic components from strong electric fields and electromagnetic waves.

Without the cage, electrical components inside the helicopter would be susceptible to lightning damage and other possible electromagnetic interference (EMI) on board.

Summit Aviation, a Greenwich AeroGroup company, was selected last year to manufacture the protective enclosure known as a Faraday cage.

"The Summit team is proud to be a member of the Northrop Grumman Fire Scout team and supply the Faraday cage structure for the Fire Scout program. This partnership between our organizations resulted in the structure being completed in five months," said Ralph Kunz, general manager for Summit Aviation.

Northrop Grumman is the prime contractor for the U.S. Navy's Fire Scout program. A total of 28 new MQ-8C Endurance Upgrade Fire Scouts will be built using a purpose-modified Bell 407 air vehicle.

"Adding the Faraday cage to Fire Scout will provide the Navy with improved accessibility and maintainability by centrally locating key critical avionics components and protect them from outside electrical interference," said George Vardoulakis, vice president for tactical unmanned systems with Northrop Grumman's Aerospace Systems sector.

Once completed, the Faraday cages will be shipped to Northrop Grumman's Unmanned Systems Center in Moss Point, Miss., where electronics will be incorporated and tested prior to installation on the MQ-8C airframe.

The larger MQ-8C Endurance Upgrade Fire Scout will provide the Navy with increased range by over 1/3, doubles endurance and increases payload capacity by 50%.

Fire Scout is currently deployed on Navy frigates and in Afghanistan providing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance to maritime and ground commanders.

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