 93-F-2470

NEWS RELEASE

United States Air Force

AIR FORCE FLIGHT TEST CENTER, OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS (AFMC),
EDWARDS AFB, CA 93523-5000 (805) 277-3510

Oct. 1, 1993

BMDO TO DISPLAY HALE

Edwards AFB, Calif. -- The Ballistic Missile Defense Organization will display the world's first high-altitude, long-endurance (HALE) solar-electric unmanned aerial vehicle Oct. 5, 8:30 a.m. here.

This partially solar-powered vehicle will begin a series of low-altitude test flights during the October/November time frame over Rogers Dry Lake Bed here with support from the NASA/Dryden Research Center here. Fully solar-powered flight tests are planned at the same location in 1994.

The goal of the program is to develop a solar-electric UAV that can fly at extremely high altitudes for weeks to months at a time, operating much like an atmospheric satellite. Such UAVs could provide the United States with a broad range of military, civil and commercial capabilities not now in existence.

In 1992, BMDO became very interested in ways to counter ballistic missiles in the early stages of flight. HALE UAVs were identified as candidate platforms for missile launch detection and as carriers for lightweight antimissile weapons.

The aircraft, called the RAPTOR/PATHFINDER, was built in 1983 at AeroEnvironment, Inc., Monrovia, Calif., by a team led by Dr. Paul MacCready. It was initially built and flown as a battery-powered UAV.

-more-

#576

The PATHFINDER is one of two experimental UAVs being considered for theater missions. The other is a gasoline-powered variant called the RAPTOR/DEMONSTRATOR which is built by Scaled Composites, Inc., Mojave, Calif., under the leadership of Burt Rutan.

Lt. Col. Dale Tietz, USAF, the BMDO program manager for RAPTOR/PATHFINDER, will be on hand to brief reporters on the aircraft's capabilities and its applicability to BMDO missions.

For more information about access to Edwards AFB and the display site, please contact Dottie Spiegelberg (media relations), Air Force Flight Test Center Public Affairs, (805) 277-4127.

~~-more-~~

-30-