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NNSA unveils three new aircraft for nuclear incident response

Aerial Measuring System aircraft features specialized radiation detection systems

WASHINGTON – The Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (DOE/NNSA) unveiled three new aircraft for nuclear incident response at an event at Joint Base Andrews Dec. 18.

Equipped with specialized radiation detection systems, the new King Air 350ER aircraft will be used by NNSA's Aerial Measuring System (AMS) teams to conduct measurements of air and ground contamination following a nuclear or radiological accident or incident and to conduct baseline surveys for normal levels of radiation in the environment in preparation for major public events.

One of the planes will be based at the Nevada National Security Site's (NNSS) Remote Sensing Laboratory (RSL) at Nellis Air Force Base in Southern Nevada, and the other two will be based at the NNSS' RSL location at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland.

Visit the NNSS' YouTube page for video of the aircraft in action: complete video, b-roll.

DOE Under Secretary for Nuclear Security and NNSA Administrator Lisa E. Gordon-Hagerty, Associate Administrator for Counterterrorism and Counterproliferation Jay A. Tilden, and Rep. Ron Estes (Kansas 4th District) delivered remarks at the event.

"AMS is a premier example of the critical work that NNSA does to make our nation and world safer," Administrator Gordon-Hagerty said. "As part of its dual public safety and national security mission, AMS aircraft frequently support security preparations for high-profile events such as presidential inaugurations, the Super Bowl, Boston Marathon, and other major public events. Although these deployments are not well-known to the public, they're part of a critical apparatus working behind the scenes to keep the American people safe."

"The delivery of these aircraft will replace aging equipment to ensure the NNSA can respond to nuclear incidents," said Congressman Estes (R-Kan.). "I'm especially proud that the hardworking employees at Kansas-based Textron Aviation were an essential part of fulfilling that goal. From general aviation to protecting national security, the significant impact of our community's aerospace manufacturing industry continues to grow."

The new aircraft replace aging assets and improve AMS' reliability and range in providing rapid, wide-area assessments of radiological or nuclear events anywhere in the continental United States.

AMS is a key component of the Nuclear Emergency Support Team (NEST), which encompasses all DOE/NNSA nuclear incident response assets. Other elements within NEST include:

- Radiological Assistance Program (RAP), which provides assistance for incidents involving radioactive materials
- Accident Response Group (ARG), which responds to any accident involving a U.S. nuclear weapon
- The Joint Technical Operations Team and National Search Task Force, which respond to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) device missions.
- National Atmospheric Release Advisory Center (NARAC), which provides real-time computer models showing the atmospheric transport of hazardous materials
- The DOE component of the Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center (FRMAC), which responds to major radiological public health emergencies.

Click here to learn more about AMS.

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The NNSS and its related facilities help ensure the security of the United States and its allies by: supporting the stewardship of the nation's nuclear deterrent; providing nuclear and radiological emergency response capabilities and training; contributing to key nonproliferation and arms control initiatives; executing national-level experiments in support of the National Laboratories; working with national security customers and other federal agencies on important national security activities; and providing long-term environmental stewardship of the NNSS's Cold War legacy.

The NNSS is managed and operated by Mission Support and Test Services LLC (MSTS). MSTS is a limited liability company consisting of Honeywell International Inc., Jacobs Engineering Group Inc., and HII Nuclear. The NNSS falls under the jurisdiction of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), an agency within the U.S. Department of Energy. The Site's operations are government-controlled and contractor-operated, and are overseen by NNSA's Nevada Field Office, headquartered in North Las Vegas.

For more information on the NNSS, visit www.nnss.gov.

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Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear explosive testing; works to reduce the global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.

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