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DARPA Selects Aurora for Phoenix Program

Cambridge, MA August 13, 2012 – Aurora Flight Sciences was recently selected by DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) for the Phoenix program to explore development of a new satellite morphology through creation of "satlets" capable of harvesting key components from retired spacecraft in earth orbit.

The goal of the DARPA Phoenix program is to develop technologies to cooperatively harvest and re-use valuable components from retired, nonworking satellites in geostationary orbit and to demonstrate the ability to create new spacecraft systems at greatly reduced cost.

Aurora and its partners, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, will develop prototypes of the attachment mechanisms to be used by the satlets to position themselves on the retired spacecraft's antenna. Aurora's team also intends to demonstrate a distributed control system to accurately position and point the antenna once the satlets are attached. The satlets are designed to point the antenna and relay the radio signals collected by the antenna to the ground.

The reconfigured satellites are intended to provide additional communications bandwidth to US military customers at a fraction of the cost of launching new satellites.

Aurora is responsible for the design and integration of the satlets, as well as testing of the prototypes. MIT will provide control design expertise and microthruster technology to be used by the satlets to point the antennas. JPL is responsible for software development, verification, and testing.

"Aurora looks forward to working with DARPA to develop innovative solutions for the ambitious Phoenix program," said Javier de Luis, Aurora's Vice President for Research and Development. "Exploring a completely different methodology to build spacesystems from a new technology of "satlets" offers the potential to harvest useable subsystems from retired satellites, creating affordable solutions for increased communications bandwidth."

About Aurora Flight Sciences
Aurora Flight Sciences is a leader in the development and manufacturing of advanced aerospace vehicles. Aurora is headquartered in Manassas, VA and operates production plants in Bridgeport, WV and Columbus, MS; and a Research and Development Center in Cambridge, MA. To view recent press releases and more about Aurora please visit our website at www.aurora.aero.

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