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Aurora Flight Sciences Wins NASA Contract for a Mars Orbiting Sample Retrieval External Orbit Capture (MOSR/EXOCAP)

Cambridge, MA, March 21, 2011 – The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has awarded Aurora Flight Sciences a contract to develop a flight-quality orbiting sample (OS) detection and capture mechanism design based on research data and experience with the Mars Orbiting Sample Retrieval (MOSR) test bed. The contract leverages the state-of-the-art research into sample capture mechanisms, contact dynamics and capture mechanism detection methods and builds on Aurora's experience with the Synchronized Position, Hold, Engage, and Reorient Experimental Satellites (SPHERES) currently operating aboard the International Space Station (ISS).

The Phase 1 effort will initiate a trade study to evaluate the use of the ISS as a system checkout and deployment platform for a risk-reduction test in LEO of the tracking, rendezvous and capture mechanisms. In support of these risk-reduction tests, Aurora will also examine the navigation and propulsion changes needed to enable SPHERES to operate outside the ISS.

These efforts will provide the next steps in the transition of the knowledge and experience gained to date with the MOSR test bed towards a practical capture and containment system for use in Low Earth Orbit demonstration flights and Mars Sample Return objectives envisioned for later this decade.

About Aurora Flight Sciences

Aurora Flight Sciences designs and builds robotic aircraft and other advanced aerospace vehicles for scientific and military applications. 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 web site at www.aurora.aero.

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