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Aurora Flight Sciences Selected for DARPA's F6 Program

Cambridge, MA, June 28, 2011 – Aurora Flight Sciences announced its selection by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) for the System F6 fractionated spacecraft program. Over the next thirty months, Aurora will develop and verify algorithms, software, protocols, interfaces and reference implementations that can be deployed in future spacecraft. Aurora's team includes the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Lockheed Martin's Advanced Technology Center, and the University of Maryland.

"Fractionation is a disruptive technology that will completely change the way spacecraft systems are developed in the future," stated Chief Scientist and Vice President of Research and Development, Javier de Luis. "By providing services to all spacecraft in a cluster, we will significantly lower the barriers to entry for new spacecraft developers, which hopefully will lead to rapid transition of new technology into space-based military and commercial systems."

Aurora's approach will include innovations in scalability, parametric modeling, algorithm development, software verification and validation, and open source development. We will verify our theoretical models using state of the art ground test facilities, as well as the Synchronized Position Hold, Engage, Reorient Experimental Satellites (SPHERES) test bed currently on-board the International Space Station.

The goal of the System F6 program is to demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of fractionated space architectures, where the functionality of traditional monolithic satellites is delivered by a cluster of wirelessly interconnected modules capable of sharing resources. This approach enhances the adaptability and survivability of space systems, while also shortening development timelines and reducing barriers to entry for participation in the national space industry. Aurora has supported DARPA's efforts in this area since 2005, with initial development work on wireless power transfer and propellant-less propulsion. Aurora participated on three of the industry teams that performed the initial DARPA F6 Phase I studies that preceded this effort.

About Aurora Flight Sciences

Aurora Flight Sciences designs and builds robotic aircraft 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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