



*Northrop Grumman image*

## **BAM!**

### **South Mississippi lands spy plane work**

*Some of the work on new Navy spy planes will be done in South Mississippi as the region begins to benefit from a field that's getting hotter all the time...*

**F**or the second time in less than two months, the Gulf Coast region learned it will benefit from a major military contract. The BAMS project promises to bring more high-paying jobs and reinforce the growing regional aerospace corridor.

On Tuesday the Navy chose Northrop Grumman Corp. for a \$1.6 billion contract to develop an unmanned sur-

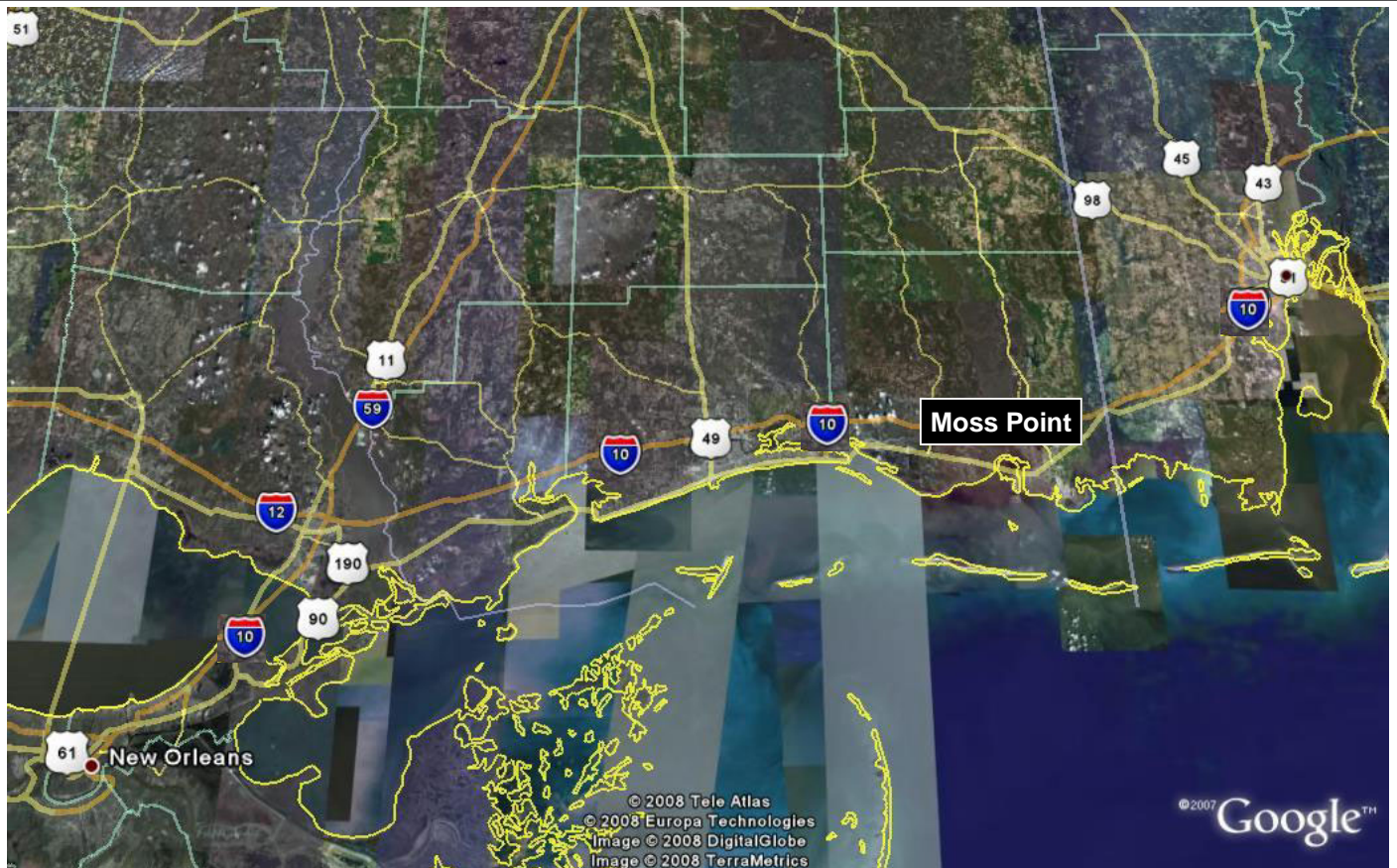
veillance system using a Navy version of the battle-tested, long endurance Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicle. Los Angeles-based Northrop Grumman beat Bethesda, Md.-based Lockheed Martin and Chicago's Boeing for the project.

While the contract is for the initial development of the Broad Area Maritime Surveillance System (BAMS) UAS (unmanned aerial system), the ultimate

value will be several billion dollars. The Navy is expected to buy about 40 aircraft. In addition, the Australian government, which has also invested in the project, is expected to be a customer for the RQ4N.

For the Mississippi Gulf Coast the contract represented an important win. Some of the work will be done at the Northrop Grumman Unmanned Systems Center at the Trent Lott Aviation Technology Park in Moss Point. The workload of that facility has been growing since it first opened in 2006.

George Freeland, executive director of the Jackson County Economic De-



*Top image*

Moss Point, in the eastern portion of the Mississippi Gulf Coast aerospace corridor, is in line for more UAV work.

velopment Foundation, was an early advocate of the value of building a UAV center in Moss Point, in part because he saw UAVs as a growth field with implications down the road for a county best known for shipbuilding.

He apparently was on target.

Just this Monday in a speech at the Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., Secretary of Defense Robert Gates pushed for even more unmanned aircraft. He complained that the military is stuck in old ways and not moving aggressively enough to meet battlefield needs for UAVs.

That push for more military UAVs promises to fuel an already hot military market for drones. Just this month a Forecast International analyst predicted the UAV market – include air vehicles, ground control equipment and payloads – will be worth \$13.6 billion through 2014. Military and Aerospace Electronics quoted analyst Larry Dickerson as saying that U.S. companies have a value share of 50 percent, and could gain an-

other 5 percent to 10 percent over the next decade.

“The value of Global Hawk production over the next 10 years could reach \$3.5 billion,” Dickerson said.

Northrop Grumman believes that sales of the Global Hawk air vehicles could exceed 200 units, according to Military and Aerospace Electronics.

### **The BAMS competition**

The System Development and Demonstration (SDD) announced Tuesday for BAMS is the culmination of a year-long competition between the largest defense contractors in the nation. The Navy received industry proposals in May 2007.

“This announcement represents the Navy’s largest investment in unmanned aircraft systems to date,” said Capt. Bob Dishman, program manager for the BAMS program.

Northrop Grumman Integrated Systems proposed the Global Hawk, Boeing the Gulfstream G550 and the Lock-

heed Martin-General Atomics Aeronautical Systems a larger version of the Predator, the MQ 9 Reaper/Mariner.

The BAMS program is designed to provide persistent maritime surveillance capability by 2014. It will involve building between 15 and 48 UAVs that will be based at five stations worldwide. Each UAV is required to have a 50,000-foot ceiling and be able to penetrate cloud cover.

Global Hawk, powered by a Rolls-Royce engine, can fly above 60,000 feet for a maximum 36 hours over a target. It was used in the 2003 invasion of Iraq and has an ongoing role.

The BAMS system will serve as an adjunct to the retiring Lockheed P-3 Orion fleet before eventually working with the P-3 replacement, the Boeing P-8 Poseidon. System development and demonstration is scheduled for FY 2008, with low rate initial production set for FY 2012 and initial operational capability in FY 2014.



Northrop Grumman image

The Global Hawks for the Navy will have much of the work done at the UAV center in Moss Point.

The Navy's program is designed for persistent maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) data collection and dissemination capability to provide continuous battle-space awareness.

### Local impact

With a Northrop Grumman win, the Global Hawk portion of the workforce in Moss Point will more than double to 37 positions, while sales related to activities at Moss Point will increase by 40 percent – up to \$14 million, according to Northrop Grumman officials. While that may not sound like a particularly large number, that's just the start.

Jim Stratford, manager of communications at Northrop Grumman in Melbourne, Fla., has said that for the Navy BAMS program, 14 airframes would be built between 2013 and 2014. He also has pointed out that a BAMS win would likely lead to additional international sales of Global Hawks, which will

have a direct impact on Moss Point's future.

In addition to BAMS, another program that would bring eight more Global Hawks to Moss Point is the

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George Freeland, JCEDF

NATO AGS (alliance ground surveillance) program. It envisions using Global Hawks equipped with Multi-Platform Radar Technology sensors to provide the kind of surveillance for NATO that's performed for the U.S. military by Joint Stars.

All of that bodes well for the 101,000 square-foot facility north of Trent Lott International Airport. The first tenant of the 300-acre Trent Lott Aviation Technology Park, the UAV center officially opened in April 2006 and has been on a tear right from the start.

While the facility originally was designed to perform finishing work on the Fire Scout unmanned helicopter, the decision was made to also provide work on the Global Hawk fuselage and the size of the facility was increased dramatically.

Northrop Grumman officials said from the start that the company would bring more work to the facility.

Within its first year, the plant also did work on the Hunter UAV. Northrop

Grumman has first rights to another 30 areas directly north of the unmanned systems center.

### Growth of the corridor

The BAMS win is yet another piece of the corridor that's slowly developing in South Mississippi and the rest of the Central Gulf Coast.

Northrop Grumman, third largest U.S. defense contractor after Lockheed Martin and Boeing, is fresh from a victory over Boeing Co. for an aerial refueling tanker contract. The company and

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Workers Mark Reed (top) and Jessie Kemp drill holes on an RQ-4 at Northrop Grumman Unmanned Systems Center in Moss Point. *Northrop Grumman photo*

partner EADS (European Aeronautic Defence and Space Co.) plan to assemble the tankers in Mobile, Ala., some 40 miles from the Moss Point UAV center.

The past few months have brought other major projects to the region. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration last year decided to make Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans a key location to build portions of the next generation of space vehicles. NASA officials have said that work will likely spill into South Mississippi.

That was followed by the tanker contract announcement. Even before that announcement, EADS opened an Airbus engineering center in Mobile at the Brookley Industrial Complex.

“The BAMS project, coupled with the KC-45 refueling tanker contract in Mobile, will serve to accelerate the development of a robust, internationally recognized aerospace corridor in South Mississippi,” said Freeland.

Larry Barnett, executive director of the Harrison County Development Commission, said that what’s happened over the past few years – aerospace companies investing in this region – will, like in the financial field, have a compounding effect.

“A lot of times you see a project lands and then down the road you get other projects as a result of the initial one,” said Barnett, whose county stands to benefit from both the NASA-related aerospace activity in Hancock County and the military-related activity in Jackson County.

He points out that Columbus, Miss., which landed the EADS Eurocopter plant several years ago, ended up with additional aerospace operations. The same thing is going to happen because of the Mobile, Ala., tanker project. He said EADS has already said it expects to move other production to the region.

- *David Tortorano*