



U.S. Navy Fact Sheet

E-6B *Mercury* airborne command post

Description

Communications relay and strategic airborne command post aircraft. Provides survivable, reliable, and enduring airborne command, control, and communications between the National Command Authority (NCA) and U.S. strategic and non-strategic forces. Two squadrons, the "Ironmen" of VQ-3 and the "Shadows" of VQ-4 deploy more than 20 aircrews from Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma to meet these requirements.

Background

Boeing derived the E-6A from its commercial 707 to replace the aging EC-130Q in the performance of the Navy's TACAMO ("Take Charge and Move Out") mission. TACAMO links the NCA with naval ballistic missile forces during times of crisis. The aircraft carries a very low frequency communication system with dual trailing wire antennas. The Navy accepted the first E-6A in August 1989.

The E-6B was conceived as a replacement for the Air Force's Airborne Command Post due to the age of the EC-135 fleet. The E-6B modified an E-6A by adding battlestaff positions and other specialized equipment. The E-6B is a dual-mission aircraft capable of fulfilling either the E-6A mission or the airborne strategic command post mission and is equipped with an airborne launch control system (ALCS). The ALCS is capable of launching U.S. land based intercontinental ballistic missiles. The first E-6B aircraft was accepted in December 1997 and the E-6B assumed its dual operational mission in October 1998. The E-6 fleet was completely modified to the E-6B configuration in 2003.

Point Of Contact

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General Characteristics

Primary Function: Communications relay for fleet ballistic missile submarines (A and B models) and airborne command post for U.S. Strategic forces (B model).

Contractor: The Boeing Company.

Date Deployed: October 1998.

Unit Cost: 141.7 million.

Propulsion: Four CFM-56-2A-2 High bypass turbofans.

Length: 150 feet, 4 inches (45.8 meters).

Height: 42 feet 5 inches (12.9 meters).

Wingspan: 148 feet, 4 inches (45.2 meters).

Weight: Max gross, take-off. 342,000 lbs (154,400 kg).

Airspeed: 522 knots, 600 miles (960 km) per hour.

Ceiling: Above 40,000 feet.

Range: 6,600 nautical miles (7,590 statute miles, 12,144 km) with 6 hours loiter time.

Crew: 22

Last Update: 17 February 2009