BOEING TANKER PLANE MAKES FIRST FLIGHT

News / Manufacturer

Boeing's first fully equipped KC-46A aerial **tanker** completed a four-hour inaugural **flight** on Friday, a milestone for the USD$49 billion aircraft that has run into cost and scheduling issues in recent years.

The company tweeted pictures of the tanker as it took off from Paine Field in Everett, Washington.

Boeing test pilots performed operational checks on engines, flight controls and environmental systems and took the tanker to a maximum altitude of 35,000 feet (10,668 m) before landing at Boeing Field, the company.

"This first tanker flight is a key milestone for the programme," said Air Force Colonel Christopher Coombs. He said the programme would now run air stability tests, flight controls of the boom, and test the plane's aerial refuelling pods.

Boeing said it would start aerial refuelling flights with a number of US Air Force aircraft before the end of the year, which would help pave the way for a decision in 2016 to move into low-rate production.

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