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### **Centaur Begins Flight Test Program**

**Manassas, VA**, February 1, 2011 – Aurora Flight Sciences announced that the Centaur Optionally Piloted Aircraft (OPA) has begun its flight test program. The first fully-configured Centaur made its first flight on Saturday, January 22, 2011 from Aurora's base at Manassas, Virginia.

The flight crew for the first flight was Thomas Washington, serving as test director and pilot, and Jason Fine, serving as flight engineer. "The first flight served mainly to validate that all the hardware and software were working as planned," explained Washington. "Following a careful review of the data, we conducted a second flight on the 24th and a third flight on the 25th, during which all the basic UAV flight modes were turned on and carefully monitored. The initial results look fantastic."

Centaur will gradually expand its flight envelope over the next several months, leading to fully automatic takeoffs and landings by late spring. Centaur will then be fitted with an electro-optical payload and a high-bandwidth data link to demonstrate intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capability.

All of Centaur's test flights are being conducted with the flight crew on board. Fully unmanned flights will begin later this year, at a test range to be announced.

Centaur is based on the highly successful Diamond DA42 NG general aviation aircraft. The combination of advanced avionics, efficient diesel engines and composite structure make the DA42 NG the ideal platform for persistent ISR flights. Centaur is able to support many commercial and military electro-optical, radar and communication payloads in its universal nose pod and belly pod modifications.

Aurora is currently taking orders for Centaur OPA deliveries in the second half of 2011.

### **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 website at [www.aurora.aero](http://www.aurora.aero).

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