Boeing-Led Missile Defense Team Scores a "Hit"; Successful System Test Includes Intercept Over Pacific

The Ground-based Midcourse Defense Segment (GMDS) program's Integrated Flight Test Saturday was a success -- resulting in an intercept and complete destruction of the incoming target. The test, referred to as Integrated Flight Test - 6 (IFT-6), was the second system-level test of the program, incorporating all major elements into the test scenario. The Boeing Company [NYSE:BA] is the prime contractor for the GMDS (formerly National Missile Defense) Program.

"We are very pleased with the results of tonight's flight test and I would like to applaud the industry/government team that worked so hard to make it a success," said Jim Albaugh, president and chief executive officer, Boeing Space and Communications. "This intercept is another step toward the ultimate validation of the GMDS system's technology and integration. We have more tests ahead and Boeing and its industry partners will remain focused on providing a technically valid and operationally effective system."

The intercept occurred over the Pacific Ocean at approximately 11:10 p.m. EDT. The flight test sequence began with a target vehicle launch from Vandenberg Air Force Base. The Defense Support Satellites detected the target booster, equipped with a mock reentry vehicle and decoy, and the GMDS Battle Management, Command, Control and Communications (BMC3) was alerted. BMC3 cued ground-based radars that tracked the target complex and provided more accurate target information to the BMC3. The BMC3 provided a weapon tasking plan to the interceptor and gave the commands leading to the launch of the interceptor vehicle from the Kwajalein Island Atoll in the central Pacific Ocean approximately 20 minutes later.

Following booster separation, the BMC3 provided final target tracking information to the kill vehicle through the In-Flight Interceptor Communications System (IFICS). The kill vehicle intercepted and destroyed the target by hitting body-to-body at an altitude of approximately of 140 miles and a closing speed in excess of 15,000 miles per hour.

"As the second system-level test, all elements were on-line and working as intended," said Jim Evatt, executive vice president and general manager of the GMDS program. "All elements tracked, gathered and communicated data as expected and the integration was seamless."

The GMDS program involves the development, testing and potential deployment of a system to detect, track and destroy hostile intercontinental ballistic missiles before they can reach any of the 50 states.

Boeing, as prime contractor, is responsible for the development and integration of the GMDS elements, including the Ground-Based Interceptor, X-Band Radar, Battle Management Command, Control and Communication systems, Upgraded Early Warning Radars and interfaces to the Space-Based Infrared System Satellites. Major team members include Raytheon Company (kill vehicle, radars); TRW (BMC2); and Lockheed Martin Missiles & Space (Payload Launch Vehicle).

Raytheon produces the Exoatmospheric Kill Vehicle (EKV) at its Tucson, Ariz., facility. The EKV has its own infrared seeker, propulsion, communications, discrimination algorithms, guidance and control system, and computers to support target selection and intercept decisions in the end game of the intercept mission. Raytheon's Air and Missile Defense systems unit, based in Bedford, Mass., developed the Ground-Based Radar-Prototype, which is the test bed radar for the GMDS mission. Raytheon is presently developing the X-band radar, with greater capability, for the operational GMDS system, and upgrading the existing Early Warning Radars that are part of the GMDS sensor suite.

TRW is responsible for developing, integrating, testing, and operating the BMC2 capability, including the IFICS data terminal, for the GMDS effort. In the event of a hostile launch, the U.S. Space Command will control and operate the GMDS system through the BMC3 element located at both the North American Aerospace Defense Command site and the selected GMDS deployment field site.

Lockheed Martin Missiles & Space, Sunnyvale, Calif., is the contractor for the Payload Launch Vehicle (PLV). This program supports the GMDS development program by providing the vehicle to launch the EKV. Missiles & Space was responsible for integrating the EKV payload into the PLV and delivering the payload to a specific point in space.

The Joint Program Office of the Department of Defense Ballistic Missile Defense Organization directs the Ground-based Midcourse Defense Segment program.

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