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

The Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) program's Integrated Flight Test was once again a success -- resulting in an intercept and complete destruction of the incoming target. Tonight's test, referred to as Integrated Flight Test - 7 (IFT-7), was the third 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 GMD Program (formerly the National Missile Defense Program).

The intercept occurred over the Pacific Ocean at approximately 10:30 pm EST. The flight-test sequence began with a target vehicle launch from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. The Defense Support Program satellites detected the target booster, equipped with a mock reentry vehicle and decoy, and the GMD 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 Reagan Test Site 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 Communication System (IFICS). The kill vehicle intercepted and destroyed the target by hitting body-to-body at an altitude of approximately 140 miles and a closing speed in excess of 15,000 miles per hour.

The GMD 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 GMD 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 GMD mission. Raytheon is presently developing the X-Band Radar, with greater capability, for the operational GMD system, and upgrading the existing Early Warning Radars that are part of the GMD sensor suite.

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

Lockheed Martin Missiles & Space, Sunnyvale, Calif., is the contractor for the Payload Launch Vehicle (PLV). This program supports the GMD 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 program.

The Boeing Company is the largest aerospace company in the world and the United States' leading exporter. It is the world's largest manufacturer of commercial jetliners and military aircraft, and the largest NASA contractor. The company's capabilities in aerospace also include rotorcraft, electronic and defense systems, missiles, rocket engines, satellites, launch vehicles, and advanced information and communication systems. The company has an extensive global reach with customers in 145 countries.

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