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.

The test, referred to as Integrated Flight Test 8, was conducted March 15 and was the fourth 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).

GMD is currently a research and development program incorporating extensive ground and flight tests to determine system performance against long-range ballistic missile targets. With the March 15 test, there have been four successful intercepts in six flight tests since 1999, with approximately 18 more scheduled to take place over the next several years of the developmental test program. While there has been no commitment to deploy the GMD technology, extensive testing efforts are scheduled to take place under operationally realistic conditions with the establishment of a new testbed in the central and northern Pacific Ocean areas and with a new testbed complex planned for Fort Greely, Alaska beginning in 2004.

Boeing, as prime contractor, is responsible for the development and integration of the GMD components, including the Ground-Based Interceptor, Ground-Based Radar Prototype, Battle Management, Command, Control and Communication systems, Early Warning Radars and interfaces to the Defense Support Program. Major team members include Raytheon Company (kill vehicle, radars); TRW (BMC2); and Lockheed Martin Space Systems, Missiles & Space Operations.

The intercept occurred over the Pacific Ocean. 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 three decoys, and the GMD Battle Management, Command, Control and Communications 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.

Following booster separation, the BMC3 provided final target tracking information to the kill vehicle through the In-Flight Interceptor Communication System. 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 Joint Program Office of the Department of Defense Missile Defense Agency directs the Ground-based Midcourse Defense program.

Boeing Space and Communications, headquartered in Seal Beach, Calif., is the world's largest space and communications company. A unit of The Boeing Company, S&C provides integrated solutions in launch services, human space flight and exploration, missile defense, and information and communications. It is NASA's largest contractor; a leading provider of space-based communications; the primary systems integrator for U.S. missile defense; and a leading provider of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. The global enterprise has customers worldwide and manufacturing operations throughout the United States and Australia.

Photo available at the Boeing Image Gallery. IFT-8 Successful Intercept -- Integrated Flight Test (IFT) -8 took place on March 15, 2002. The interceptor was launched from Meck Island in the Kwajalein Island Atoll. The launch was part of the flight test program for the Ground-based Midcourse Defense Segment program.

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