Boeing SLAM-ER Becomes First Missile with Operational Automatic Target Acquisition

The Boeing [NYSE:BA] Standoff Land Attack Missile-Expanded Response, or SLAM-ER, Automatic Target Acquisition capability has become operational with the completion of Operational Test and Evaluation, or OPEVAL.

An independent test team from the U.S. Navy's Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 9 conducted the evaluation at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Calif. The OPEVAL report issued by Commander, Operational Test and Evaluation Force on Sept. 3, 2002, grades the SLAM-ER ATA operationally effective and operationally suitable.

"This new capability greatly enhances the missile's operational flexibility," said Jim O'Neill, general manager of Boeing Navy Missile Systems. "This spiral development improvement extends SLAM ER's reputation of being the most versatile and accurate weapon system in the U.S. Navy's inventory."

The ATA system adds a second mission computer to the SLAM-ER missile. Algorithms in the computer examine output from the missile's infrared imager for target locations, enabling the ATA system to locate small targets in cluttered environments and either cue the pilot or guide the missile autonomously to the target.

SLAM-ER is the only weapon of its type with an operational ATA capability. In addition to ATA modes of operation, SLAM-ER is capable of flying automatically to its target using GPS-only inputs. It has several different modes for tracking targets using its seeker including being directed to a desired impact point manually by an operator in an aircraft.

"ATA is an important capability for the warfighter," said Capt. Carl Reiber, program manager, Standoff Missile Systems, PMA-258. "This is the culmination of a great team effort between the U.S. Navy and Boeing."

SLAM-ER addresses the U.S. Navy's requirements for a precision-guided standoff outside-of-area defense weapon. SLAM-ER extends the weapon system's combat effectiveness, providing an effective, long-range, precision-strike option for both pre-planned and target-of-opportunity attack missions against land and ship targets.

This missile configuration also includes logic to process in-flight target updates for hitting moving ships or relocatable targets. This capability is expected to become operational following a successful test shot later this year.

All SLAM-ER missiles produced and deployed in the fleet today contain the ATA capability. Earlier production missiles are being retrofitted. Boeing is currently under contract with the U.S. Navy to produce 376 SLAM-ERs, with production expected to continue beyond 2004. The inventory objective is currently approximately 700 SLAM-ERs.

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