

Boeing Airborne Laser Team Achieves First Flight

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The Boeing [NYSE: BA] Airborne Laser (ABL) team flew an aircraft equipped with the integrated battle management and Beam Control/Fire Control (BC/FC) systems for the first time at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., on Dec. 3.

Boeing is the prime contractor and systems integrator for the ABL weapon system, which places a megawatt-class, high-energy Chemical Oxygen Iodine Laser on a Boeing 747-400F aircraft to detect, track and destroy ballistic missiles in the boost phase of flight. ABL also can pass information on launch site, target track and predicted impact to other layers of the global ballistic missile defense system.

"This is a significant technological achievement in the ABL program and demonstrates the continued steady flow of progress we've been making," said Jim Evatt, vice president and general manager of Boeing Missile Defense Systems.

The ABL aircraft conducted initial airworthiness and battle management testing in 2002 after extensive modification from a civil freighter to the first airborne platform to house a megawatt-class directed energy weapon system. Following those successful tests, it was delivered to Edwards AFB in late 2002 to begin further weapon systems installation.

"We will continue flight tests to validate the integrated operation of the battle management and beam control segments and to ensure our expectations regarding vibration and its effect on the system are within the acceptable tolerances," Evatt said.

ABL is a key component of the government's overall ballistic missile defense architecture. In an operational scenario, the ABL's sensor system will detect and track an enemy's boosting missile, determine its position and destroy it with the high energy laser. The ABL's sensor system also identifies the launch location and predicts the impact location, which is communicated to other assets in the missile defense architecture.

Boeing is the weapon system integrator for ABL and provides the modified aircraft and battle management segments. Other ABL partners include Northrop-Grumman, which provides the laser segment and Lockheed Martin, which provides the BC/FC segment.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a \$27 billion business. It provides network-centric system solutions to its global military, government, and commercial customers. It is a leading provider of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems; the world's largest military aircraft manufacturer; the world's largest satellite manufacturer and a leading provider of space-based communications; the primary systems integrator for U.S. missile defense and Department of Homeland Security; NASA's largest contractor; and a global leader in launch services.

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