Boeing Small Diameter Bomb Soars in Longest Test Yet

In the first of two flight tests this month, a Boeing [NYSE:BA] Small Diameter Bomb (SDB) flew more than 55 miles from an altitude of 30,000 feet, hitting within 34 inches of its planned impact point on a target barge in the Gulf of Mexico. It was the longest flight to date, and typical of the accuracy provided by the Small Diameter Bomb system. On average, the SDB has hit 42 inches from its targeted impact point.

The May 11 test, near Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., was the first since the U.S. Air Force's decision in April to begin low-rate initial production of 201 SDBs. It was followed by a second successful test at the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico.

For the second test, a U.S. Air Force F-15E released an SDB May 26 from 28,600 feet, approximately 35 miles from its planned impact point on a target board. The test employed GPS "jamming", to significantly degrade accuracy by denying or preventing the GPS signal from reaching the weapon. The Anti-Jam system on the SDB rejected the interference and the weapon maintained its intended glide path, hitting within seven feet of the target, giving the SDB an unprecedented development test record of 23 successful flight tests out of 25 attempts.

"In April, our leadership showed their confidence in SDB by approving our entry into low rate initial production, based on meeting our commitments and reducing risk with an aggressive test program," said Rich Walley, Air Armament Center's Miniature Munitions Systems Group deputy director. "We are very pleased that the SDB continues to prove itself with successful flight tests."

The all-weather SDB weapon system holds four SDBs and is compatible with every U.S. fighter and bomber aircraft. It has a standoff range of 60 nautical miles. At 71 inches long, this 250-pound weapon quadruples the weapons load on each aircraft. The SDB will first be deployed on the Boeing F-15E Strike Eagle in 2006.

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