Airborne Laser Team Completes New Phase of Payload Testing

The Boeing [NYSE:BA] Airborne Laser (ABL) team has completed flight testing of the system's passive mission payload, moving the program through another phase of critical testing.

This test event, called the Low Power Systems Integration-Passive test, included ground and flight tests of ABL's battle management command and control system and the Beam Control/Fire Control segment.

"Completion of this test phase for the Airborne Laser program further demonstrates the air worthiness and the functionality of the airborne mission payload," said Boeing Missile Defense Systems Vice President and General Manager Pat Shanahan. "With each testing increment, the ABL Team is making steady progress in bringing the ABL into the hands of the warfighter to defend against ballistic missile threats."

Boeing is the prime contractor and systems integrator for the ABL, which consists of a megawatt-class, high-energy Chemical Oxygen Iodine Laser placed on a Boeing 747-400 aircraft. ABL is designed to detect, track and destroy ballistic missiles in their boost phase of flight. ABL also can pass information on launch site, target track and predicted impact to other layers of the government's ballistic missile defense architecture.

During this latest phase of testing the ABL, the ABL Team demonstrated the stability and alignment of the two beam control and fire control optical benches with the turret. That test demonstrated the system's pointing and vibration control functions as well as its ability to acquire targets as directed by the battle management segment.

In May, the ABL's 1.7 meter wide conformal window was unstowed for the first time during flight, a maneuver necessary for the weapon system to complete its mission of shooting down a ballistic missile in flight. The Team also has demonstrated the battle management and command and control systems ability to autonomously detect and hand off targets using Link 16 secure communications.

With completion of this phase of testing, the ABL YAL-1A aircraft will transition to Boeing's Wichita facility to undergo final modification to accommodate installation of the high energy lasers and begin Low Power System Integration-Active ground testing. During the active testing, two low power illuminator lasers will be integrated and flight tested to demonstrate acquisition and fine tracking with active illumination. The testing also will verify ABL's atmospheric compensation design and operation.

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.

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