Boeing GMD Team Launches Target, Tests Upgraded Radar

A Boeing-led [NYSE: BA] industry team and the U.S. Missile Defense Agency (MDA) have successfully completed a test of key parts of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system.

During today's test, a newly upgraded radar at Beale Air Force Base, Calif., demonstrated its capability by tracking a long-range ballistic missile target launched from Kodiak, Alaska. The radar, which provides wide-area surveillance of potential hostile ballistic missiles, recently received hardware and software enhancements, including new data-processing equipment, to enable it to more precisely project a threat missile's trajectory.

"Today's successful target launch verified that the Beale radar can detect, track and provide precise trajectory information to help defend against a long-range ballistic missile attack" said Pat Shanahan, vice president and general manager of Boeing Missile Defense Systems. "We are extremely proud of this achievement as we continue to deliver increased missile defense capability to our military customer."

The test also served as a rehearsal for Flight Test 2 (FT-2), the first of several GMD flight tests planned for later this year. During FT-2, at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., an operationally configured interceptor will be launched from an operational GMD site for the first time. A target vehicle also will be launched from Kodiak during the test. The objective of the test is for the interceptor kill vehicle to collect data on the target vehicle; no intercept is planned.

Today's test is the latest in a series of successes for the GMD program. In December at the Ronald Reagan Missile Site at Kwajalein Atoll in the Pacific, the program conducted the first flight test of an operationally configured interceptor. In January, the Sea-Based X-Band Radar, which will become part of the overall missile defense sensor architecture for both operations and testing, made an interim stop in Hawaii during its trip from Texas, where it was assembled, to its homeport of Adak, Alaska.

Boeing is the prime contractor for the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system, which is the centerpiece of the Missile Defense Agency's overall layered ballistic missile defense architecture. Industry partners include Raytheon, Orbital Sciences Corp. and Northrop Grumman.

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