Boeing and Airborne Laser Teammates Achieve Final 2007 Milestone

ST. LOUIS, Jan. 03, 2008 -- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA], industry teammates and the U.S. Missile Defense Agency have achieved the final 2007 milestone for the Airborne Laser (ABL) program, capping a successful year for the revolutionary airborne directed energy weapon system.

The final event for 2007 occurred when:

- The Northrop Grumman laser team completed inspection and refurbishment of the high-energy laser components that were previously tested successfully in a system integration laboratory at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.
- The team completed all technical drawings for laser installation on the aircraft, incorporating improvements learned during the lab tests. Early release of the drawings and installation plans allows Boeing and Northrop Grumman technicians to assemble and test the high-energy chemical laser in one-third the time originally required.
- Modifications to the ABL hangar at Edwards were completed that will allow ground tests of the high-energy laser to occur aboard the ABL aircraft.

Earlier in 2007, the Airborne Laser completed a series of flight tests of the Lockheed Martin-developed beam control/fire control system at Edwards. In the tests, ABL tracked an airborne target, measured and compensated for atmospheric turbulence and fired a surrogate high-energy laser at the target.

The team is now installing the high-energy laser in the aircraft at Edwards. When integration is completed, the program will conduct an extensive series of system-level ground and flight tests, leading to an intercept test against an in-flight ballistic missile in 2009.

"The team has done a tremendous job completing system flight tests with the surrogate high-energy laser and commencing installation of the actual high-energy laser," said Scott Fancher, vice president and general manager of Boeing Missile Defense Systems. "Once again, we made and demonstrated enormous progress toward ushering in a new age of directed energy weapons."

The Airborne Laser consists of a modified Boeing 747-400F whose back half will hold the high-energy laser, designed and built by Northrop Grumman. The aircraft's front half contains the beam control/fire control system, provided by Lockheed Martin, and the battle management system, provided by Boeing.

Boeing is the prime contractor for ABL, which will provide speed-of-light capability to destroy all classes of ballistic missiles in their boost phase of flight. ABL's speed, precision and lethality also have potential for other missions, including destroying air-to-air, cruise and surface-to-air missiles. Boeing provides the modified aircraft and the battle management system and is the overall systems integrator. ABL partners are Northrop Grumman [NYSE: NOC], which supplies the high-energy and beacon illuminator lasers, and Lockheed Martin [NYSE: LMT], which provides the nose-mounted turret and the beam control/fire control system.

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