Boeing Fires New Thin-Disk Laser, Achieving Solid-State Laser Milestone

ST. LOUIS, June 03, 2008 -- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] fired its new thin-disk laser system repeatedly in recent tests, achieving the highest known simultaneous power, beam quality and run time for any solid-state laser to date.

In each laser firing at Boeing's facility in West Hills, Calif., the high-energy laser achieved power levels of over 25 kilowatts for multi-second durations, with a measured beam quality suitable for a tactical weapon system. The Boeing laser integrates multiple thin-disk lasers into a single system. Through these successful tests, the Boeing team has proven the concept of scalability to a 100-kilowatt-class system based on the same architecture and technology.

"Solid-state lasers will revolutionize the battlefield by giving the warfighter an ultra-precision engagement capability that can dramatically reduce collateral damage," said Scott Fancher, vice president and general manager of Boeing Missile Defense Systems. "These successful tests show that Boeing has made solid progress toward making this revolutionary capability a reality."

The thin-disk laser is an initiative to demonstrate that solid-state laser technologies are now ready to move out of the laboratory and into full development as weapon systems. Solid-state lasers are powered by electricity, making them highly mobile and supportable on the battlefield. The Boeing laser represents the most electrically efficient solid-state laser technology known. The system is designed to meet the rapid-fire, rapid-retargeting requirements of area-defense, anti-missile and anti-mortar tactical high-energy laser systems. It is also ideal for non-lethal, ultra-precision strike missions urgently needed by warfighters in war zones.

"This accomplishment demonstrates Boeing's commitment to advancing the state of the art in directed energy technology," said Gary Fitzmire, vice president and program director of Boeing Directed Energy Systems. "These successful tests are a significant milestone toward providing reliable and supportable lasers to U.S. warfighters."

Boeing's approach incorporates a series of commercial-off-the-shelf, state-of-the-art lasers used in the automotive industry. These industrial lasers have demonstrated exceedingly high reliability, supportability and maintainability.

A high-power solid-state laser will damage, disable or destroy targets at the speed of light, with little to no collateral damage, supporting missions on the battlefield and in urban operations.

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