Boeing Airborne Laser Team Begins Weapon System Flight Tests

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif., April 24, 2009-- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA], industry teammates and the U.S. Missile Defense Agency have begun Airborne Laser (ABL) flight tests with the entire weapon system integrated aboard the ABL aircraft.

ABL, a heavily modified Boeing 747-400F aircraft, completed its functional check flight April 21 from Edwards Air Force Base with the beam control/fire control system and the high-energy laser onboard, confirming the aircraft is airworthy, ready for more airborne tests, and on track for its missile-intercept demonstration this year.

"With ABL's return to flight, we are on the verge of fully demonstrating the unprecedented speed, mobility, precision and lethality that ABL could provide to America's warfighters," said Michael Rinn, Boeing vice president and ABL program director.

ABL would deter potential adversaries and provide speed-of-light capability to destroy all classes of ballistic missiles in their boost phase of flight. Eliminating missiles in their boost phase would reduce the number of shots required by other elements of the layered ballistic missile defense system. ABL also has the potential to be employed for other missions, including destroying aircraft and surface-to-air missiles.

The program has logged many accomplishments over the past several years. In 2007, ABL completed almost 50 flight tests that demonstrated its ability to track an airborne target, measure and compensate for atmospheric conditions, and deliver a surrogate high-energy laser beam on the target. In 2008, the team completed installing the high-energy laser onboard the aircraft and, for the first time, operated the entire weapon system at high power levels.

Boeing is the prime contractor and overall systems integrator for ABL, and provides the modified aircraft and battle management system. Northrop Grumman supplies the high-energy laser, and Lockheed Martin provides the beam control/fire control system.

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