Boeing Airborne Laser Team Completes 1st Airborne Test Against Instrumented Target Missile

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif., Aug. 13, 2009-- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA], industry teammates and the U.S. Missile Defense Agency on Aug. 10 successfully completed the Airborne Laser's (ABL) first in-flight test against an instrumented target missile, achieving a historic milestone.

During the test, the modified Boeing 747-400F aircraft took off from Edwards Air Force Base and used its infrared sensors to find a target missile launched from San Nicolas Island, Calif. The Boeing-developed battle management system aboard ABL then issued engagement and target location instructions to the beam control/fire control system, which acquired the target and fired its two solid-state illuminator lasers to track the target and measure atmospheric conditions. ABL then fired a surrogate high-energy laser at the target, simulating a missile intercept. Instrumentation on the target verified that the surrogate high-energy laser hit the target.

"This test demonstrates that the Airborne Laser can fully engage an in-flight missile with its battle management and beam control/fire control systems," said Michael Rinn, Boeing vice president and ABL program director. "Pointing and focusing a laser beam on a target that is rocketing skyward at thousands of miles per hour is no easy task, but the Airborne Laser is uniquely able to do the job."

The test follows ABL's engagement of two un-instrumented missiles in early June, which allowed the team to fine-tune the engagement sequence.

ABL will now undergo flight tests in which the aircraft will fire its high-energy laser, first into an onboard calorimeter, then through its beam control/fire control system. The ABL team then will test the entire weapon system against in-flight missiles, culminating with ABL's first high-energy laser intercept test against a ballistic missile later this year.

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's revolutionary speed, mobility, precision and lethality would make it a great asset to America's warfighters," Rinn added.

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.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses specializing in innovative and capabilities-driven customer solutions, and the world's largest and most versatile manufacturer of military aircraft. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $32 billion business with 70,000 employees worldwide.

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