Boeing Advanced Tactical Laser Defeats Ground Target in Flight Test

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M., Sept. 1, 2009 -- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] and the U.S. Air Force on Aug. 30 defeated a ground target from the air with the Advanced Tactical Laser (ATL) aircraft, demonstrating ATL's first air-to-ground, high-power laser engagement of a tactically representative target.

During the test, the C-130H aircraft took off from Kirtland Air Force Base, N.M., and fired its high-power chemical laser through its beam control system while flying over White Sands Missile Range, N.M. The beam control system acquired the ground target -- an unoccupied stationary vehicle -- and guided the laser beam to the target, as directed by ATL's battle management system. The laser beam's energy defeated the vehicle.

"This milestone demonstrates that directed energy weapon systems will transform the battlespace and save lives by giving warfighters a speed-of-light, ultra-precision engagement capability that will dramatically reduce collateral damage," said Greg Hyslop, vice president and general manager of Boeing Missile Defense Systems. "By demonstrating this capability, the ATL team has earned a distinguished place in the history of weapon system development."

The test occurred less than three months after a June 13 test in which ATL successfully fired its laser from the air for the first time, hitting a target board on the ground. The ATL team plans additional tests to further demonstrate the system's military utility. These demonstrations support the development of systems that will conduct missions on the battlefield and in urban operations.

"The bottom line is that ATL works, and works very well," said Gary Fitzmire, vice president and program director of Boeing Missile Defense Systems' Directed Energy Systems unit. "ATL's components -- the high-energy chemical laser, beam control system and battle manager -- are performing as one integrated weapon system, delivering effective laser beam energy to ground targets."

The ATL industry team also includes L-3 Communications/Brashear, which built the laser turret; HYTEC Inc., which made a variety of the weapon system's structural elements; and J.B. Henderson, which provides mechanical integration support.

Boeing leads the way in developing and integrating laser systems for a variety of customers, including the U.S. Air Force, Army and Navy. Besides ATL, these systems include the Airborne Laser, Free Electron Laser, High Energy Laser Technology Demonstrator and Tactical Relay Mirror 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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