Boeing Airborne Laser Testbed Team Destroys Boosting Ballistic Missile

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif., Feb. 12, 2010-- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA], industry teammates and the U.S. Missile Defense Agency on Feb. 11 successfully demonstrated the speed, precision and breakthrough potential of directed-energy weapons when the Airborne Laser Testbed (ALTB) engaged and destroyed a boosting ballistic missile.

This experiment marks the first time a laser weapon has engaged and destroyed an in-flight ballistic missile, and the first time that any system has accomplished it in the missile's boost phase of flight. ALTB has the highest-energy laser ever fired from an aircraft, and is the most powerful mobile laser device in the world.

"The Airborne Laser Testbed team has made history with this experiment," said Greg Hyslop, vice president and general manager of Boeing Missile Defense Systems. "Through its hard work and technical ingenuity, the government-industry team has produced a breakthrough with incredible potential. We look forward to conducting additional research and development to explore what this unique directed-energy system can do."

During the experiment, the aircraft, a modified Boeing 747-400F, took off from Edwards Air Force Base and focused its high-energy laser at the missile target during its boost phase as the aircraft flew over the Western Sea Range off the coast of California.

"We've been saying for some time that the Airborne Laser Testbed would be a pathfinder for directed energy and would expand options for policymakers and warfighters," said Michael Rinn, Boeing vice president and ALTB program director. "With this successful experiment, the Airborne Laser Testbed has blazed a path for a new generation of high-energy, ultra-precision weaponry. ALTB technology and future directed-energy platforms will transform how the United States defends itself and its friends and allies. Having the capability to precisely project force, in a measured way, at the speed of light, will save lives."

MDA officially recognized directed energy's warfare-changing potential last March, when it awarded its Technology Pioneer Award to three Boeing Airborne Laser Testbed engineers and three of their government and industry teammates for advancing key ALTB technologies.

Boeing is the prime contractor for the Airborne Laser Testbed, which is designed to provide unprecedented speed-of-light capability to intercept all classes of ballistic missiles in their boost phase of flight.

Northrop Grumman designed and built ALTB's high-energy laser, and Lockheed Martin developed the beam control/fire control system. Boeing provided the aircraft, the battle management system and overall systems integration and testing.

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Photos and video of the engagement are available at the Missile Defense Agency'sALTB Media Library.

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Additional assets available online: Video (1)