Boeing to Develop High-Brightness Laser

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M., May 12, 2011 -- The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] has received a $4.2 million, 16-month contract to design and develop a 25-kilowatt high-brightness laser for the Pentagon's High Energy Laser – Joint Technology Office (HEL-JTO). Boeing will develop the solid-state, electric laser based on the highly efficient Thin Disk Laser (TDL) technology.

The project's goal is to demonstrate that the performance of a TDL-based system is consistent with the HEL-JTO Robust Electric Laser Initiative program objectives of high brightness and high electrical efficiency.

Boeing's approach incorporates a series of commercial, off-the-shelf lasers used in many industries for cutting and welding metal parts. These proven industrial lasers have demonstrated high reliability and the associated support and maintenance benefits. Successful completion of this 16-month effort could lead to the development and production of operational versions of the laser system.

"The Thin Disk Laser project provides a great opportunity for Boeing and the Pentagon to advance the efficiency and performance of solid-state laser technology," said Mike Rinn, vice president of Boeing Directed Energy Systems. "As we work the details of this project, we are building on Boeing's industry leadership in the integration of high-power laser devices. Our team is proud to be on the forefront of directed energy capabilities."

A high-power, solid-state directed energy weapon has the ability to damage, disable or destroy targets at the speed of light, with little to no collateral damage. The laser also can flexibly support missions on the battlefield as well as in urban operations.

Boeing Directed Energy Systems, based in Albuquerque, N.M., is developing advanced laser concepts and systems to address multiple defense requirements. Key DES programs include the Airborne Laser Test Bed, funded by the Missile Defense Agency; the High Energy Laser Technology Demonstrator, funded by the U.S. Army; the Free Electron Laser, commissioned by the U.S. Navy; and the Tactical Relay Mirror System, being developed for the U.S. Air Force and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering.

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