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Directed energy expertise key to integrating laser weapons on ships

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M., Feb. 17, 2015 – Boeing [NYSE: BA] has been awarded a \$29.5 million contract to design and develop a beam control system that could provide exceptional accuracy for laser weapons on U.S. Navy warships.

Boeing will begin to design a prototype High Power Beam Control Subsystem (HP BCSS) that's compatible with High Energy Lasers (HEL) based on solid-state laser (SSL) technology. Boeing's solution will be compatible with systems other companies are designing for the Office of Naval Research's (ONR) Solid State Laser Technology Maturation (SSL-TM) program.

The resulting beam control system will focus and hold a laser on a moving aimpoint long enough to disable the target. Doing that with a ship-based laser is particularly challenging, given the maritime environment and constant movement of an at-sea vessel.

"Boeing innovations in beam control and directed energy technologies are keys to understanding laser weapon system configurations that could yield a capability for the Navy in their maritime environment," said Peggy Morse, vice president, Boeing Directed Energy & Strategic Systems (DESS).

The Boeing beam control system capitalizes on the company's work with the U.S. Army's High Energy Laser Mobile Demonstrator (HEL MD). In demonstrations at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida in 2014, in which Navy program team members participated, HEL MD acquired, tracked and destroyed targets in windy and foggy conditions. Important technical data was collected on energy systems within a maritime environment, which ONR shared with the Army and Boeing. HEL MD has disabled mortars and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) during recent testing.

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