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Airborne Laser Completes Initial Passive Testing

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. – Air Force Lieutenant General Henry “Trey” Obering, III, Director, Missile Defense Agency (MDA), today announced the YAL-1A, the Airborne Laser (ABL) aircraft, completed a critical phase of its flight test program on July 26, culminating a highly successful eight-month series of flight tests and demonstrating the performance of the ABL’s sophisticated battle management and beam control/fire control systems.

The end of the Low Power System Integration-Passive (LPSI-P) phase of tests represents a significant milestone in the ABL’s development program and sets the stage for the aircraft’s return to Boeing’s Wichita, Kansas facility for final modification prior to installation of the advanced high-power Chemical Oxygen-Iodine Laser (COIL) aboard the aircraft.

The program’s LPSI-P phase has been marked by a number of highly successful “firsts,” including un-stowing and pointing the laser turret, demonstrating the aircraft’s passive missile launch detection sensors and engagement software, expanding the aircraft’s operating envelope and collecting in-flight data on a wide variety of aircraft subsystems.

“I could not be prouder of the entire ABL team – contractor and government alike – in getting LPSI-P done.” says Colonel John Daniels, the ABL System Program Director. “It is truly amazing how much we’ve been able to accomplish in the past eight months. We have a long way to go, but we’ve made incredible progress so far.”

Upon its return to Wichita, the YAL-1A will begin the Low Power System Integration–Active (LPSI-A) phase of testing. During LPSI-A, the aircraft will undergo a series of final modifications and flight/ground tests to demonstrate its ability to detect and track targets before installation of the advanced Chemical Oxygen-Iodine Laser (COIL).

The ABL will be the first combat aircraft relying entirely upon a directed energy device as a weapon. It is designed to use directed energy to destroy a ballistic missile target shortly after it is launched, called the boost phase of flight. When it begins operations, the ABL will be an integral part of a layered ballistic missile defense that will be capable of destroying a ballistic missile of any range, during any phase of its flight.

