



News Release

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Airborne Laser Successfully Targets Simulated Missile in Flight

Lieutenant General Henry "Trey" Obering, Missile Defense Agency director, announced today that the Airborne Laser (ABL) program has reached another significant development milestone by successfully completing its first of two Low Power System Integration-Active Flight Test knowledge points. This is a critically important milestone following last year's ground testing in Wichita, Kan. During this phase of flight testing, the team demonstrated ABL's integrated battle management and beam control/fire control systems in flight by tracking, targeting and engaging an airborne target.

The effort included a number of program firsts, including the first lase external to the ABL aircraft, with both the Tracking Illuminator Laser (TILL) and the Surrogate High Energy Laser (SHEL) being propagatged through the aircraft's nose turret and illuminating the Big Crow (modified NC-135) target board. The TILL's return off the target triggered a beacon aboard Big Crow that was used by ABL to measure and compensate for atmospheric distortion before firing the SHEL at the target. Cameras on-board Big Crow verified all laser beams hit their intended locations on the target.

Completion of this in-flight engagement demonstration satisfies a key "knowledge point" that MDA is using to measure program success. The aircraft will continue flight tests against the Big Crow airborne target to further evaluate ABL's performance before beginning installation of the advanced Chemical Oxygen-Iodine Laser (COIL) at Edwards Air Force Base later this year.

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, in its "boost phase" of flight. When operational, the ABL will be an integral part of a layered Ballistic Missile Defense System.

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