MEADS Advanced Lightweight Missile Defense Launcher Completes Acceptance Tests

MEADS International completed a successful series of demonstrations and tests of its advanced lightweight launcher prototype in Brescia, Italy, and has released the first photographs of the launcher. The MEADS launcher is designed to rapidly initialize, self-load and vertically launch up to 12 Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) Missiles and is able to roll-on/roll-off C-130 transport aircraft.

(Photo: NewsCom: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20030910/FLW008)

The launcher tests included demonstrations of uploading and offloading representative PAC-3 missile canisters using a unique system that significantly reduces the manpower required by the current Patriot system. Once loaded, the canisters were elevated to the proper launch angle with emplacement of stabilizers and blast deflector. Each function was successfully performed in manual and automatic mode using the launcher control panel. To ensure C-130 compatibility, tests of dimensional requirements were also conducted.

"The tests took place in the presence of military observers from the three nations co-developing MEADS," said MEADS International Chief Engineer Pietro Ragonese. "Military representatives from Germany, Italy and the United States were all highly impressed with the simplicity of operating the launcher and its demonstrated unloading-reloading times, which were well within requirements stipulated by the three countries. The MEADS program remains on track and on budget."

"This is a tremendous step forward for the MEADS program," said MEADS International President Klaus Riedel. "The MEADS launcher introduces several advanced capabilities never before implemented in a lightweight launcher. Because it combines roll-on/roll-off capability on the C-130 and A400M aircraft with high firepower and networked operation, it is a significant advancement over the cumbersome, hard-to-transport launchers currently in use today."

Unlike Patriot, or any other deployed system, the mobile air defense system will be able to destroy all incoming tactical or medium-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles or aircraft as well as weapons of mass destruction. It provides vastly greater firepower, combat- proven "hit-to-kill" technology, 360-degree radar coverage, and a plug-and- fight battle management network architecture. Designed to replace Patriot systems in the United States and Nike Hercules systems in Italy, MEADS also meets the "capabilities oriented" requirements of Germany's air defense concept.

MEADS International developed the launcher with principal subcontractors MBDA-Italia, EADS/LFK, Lockheed Martin , ATIB, Rampini and Stewart & Stevenson.

In 1999, MEADS International, Inc. was selected by NAMEADSMA, a chartered organization of NATO, to develop MEADS. A multinational joint venture headquartered in Orlando, Fla., MEADS International's participating companies are MBDA Italia, EADS European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company and LFK-Lenkflugkorpersysteme (LFK, a subsidiary of EADS and MBDA) in Germany, and Lockheed Martin in the United States. Together, these companies have focused an international engineering team in Orlando to develop systems and technologies for MEADS, a model program for collaborative transatlantic development.

MEADS is currently in the Risk Reduction Effort phase. The United States, Germany, and Italy are financing the program in shares of 55, 28 and 17 percent respectively.

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