Lockheed Martin Successfully Demonstrates Hellfire II M299 Launcher/Platform Interface On Australian Tigre

Lockheed Martin today announced it successfully demonstrated a series of launcher and integration tests of its precision-strike Hellfire II missile and digital M299 launcher system during the maiden flight of the Australian ARH-1 Eurocopter Tigre.

This significant milestone validates the Hellfire II missile and digital M299 launcher system can interface with the European-manufactured attack helicopter, and marks the second time the M299 has been integrated onto an international aircraft -- the first being GKN Westland's WAH-64 Apache in the UK. The successful M299 integration also paves the way for the ARH-1 to carry the Hellfire II family and allows for potential use of the Hellfire on European versions of the Tigre currently flown in France and Germany.

"This testing series reflects the continuing confidence our U.S. Army and international customers place in our M299 launcher," said Mark Stenger, director of the Air-to-Ground Missile Systems program area at Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control. "This all-digital 'smart' launcher can carry and fire any combination of Hellfire II and Longbow Hellfire missiles, giving the Australian ARH-1 and other attack helicopters the ability to engage a wide range of targets in a single sortie. The digital design also minimizes system weight, complexity, power usage and support requirements."

Stenger added, "The M299 also accepts the new Joint Common Missile (JCM) for which a competition is now underway. The M299 provides interoperability with Hellfire II and Longbow, allowing JCM to be seamlessly integrated into the arsenal."

The Australian Tigre successfully performed its maiden flight at Eurocopter's Marignane plant on February 20, 2004. The aircraft will now undergo a qualification flight test program to validate delivery of the first two ARH-1 Tigres to the Australian Army Aviation Corps at the end of 2004 and demonstrate readiness for service. The Hellfire II/M299 integration efforts will continue through the fall of 2005 when Hellfire II missiles will be fired on a test range in Australia.

The Australian ARH-1 Eurocopter Tigre is derived from the Franco-German Tigre variant. It is armed with 70 mm rockets and Hellfire II air-ground missiles on its four hard points, as well as an Australia-specific communications and data transmission system.

Generally regarded as the world's premier air-to-ground missile system, the combat-proven semi-active laser-guided Hellfire II has two configurations: the high-explosive anti-tank (HEAT) round with a tandem shaped-charge warhead and the blast fragmentation version that is effective against ships, buildings, bunkers, light armored vehicles and other "soft" targets.

Headquartered in Bethesda, MD, Lockheed Martin employs about 130,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services.

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