HELLFIRE Thermobaric Warhead Approved For Production

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Lockheed Martin announced that the U.S. government has approved the thermobaric HELLFIRE (AGM-114N) missile for an accelerated full-rate production run.

A government-industry team conducted a successful Production Readiness Review (PRR) of the metal augmented charge (MAC), also known as a thermobaric warhead, clearing the way for production of the AGM-114N version of the precision-strike semi-active laser-guided HELLFIRE II missile.

The MAC warhead will be manufactured at the Alliant Techsystems facility in Rocket Center, W.Va., and shipped to Lockheed Martin for integration with the missile.

Under a $90 million Buy 11 contract with Lockheed Martin, the U.S. Army has called for the production of 900 AGM-114N MAC missiles; 180 AGM-114K missiles, the high-explosive anti-tank (HEAT) version; and conversion of 100 HEAT missiles to the MAC warhead configuration. This order extends HELLFIRE production well into 2007 at Lockheed Martin's manufacturing plants in Ocala, FL (seeker electronics), and Troy, AL (missile final assembly).

"Early versions of the MAC-configured HELLFIRE have already been combat- proven in Operation Iraqi Freedom and have been cited by the Administration as meeting an urgent requirement to suppress terrorists in urban areas," said Jim Gribschaw, program director for Air-to-Ground Missile Systems at Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control. "This missile is capable of reaching around corners to strike enemy forces hiding in cases, bunkers and hardened multi- room complexes. Coupled with HELLFIRE's highly accurate semi-active laser seeker, the MAC warhead gives our forces the ability to take out threat targets in urban environments with high lethality and minimal collateral damage."

The MAC warhead was originally designed by the Naval Air Warfare Center. Under a pre-production contract awarded in December 2004, the technical data package, manufacturing processes, facilitization, production tooling, materials and baseline hardware fabrication were accomplished on schedule, leading to the successful PRR and the green light for production.

The HELLFIRE II family of missiles includes four variations: the high- explosive anti-tank missile (AGM-114K), which defeats all known and projected armored threats; the blast fragmentation missile (AGM-114M), which defeats "soft" targets such as buildings, bunkers, light-armored vehicles and caves; the millimeter-wave (MMW) radar Longbow HELLFIRE (AGM-114L), which provides fire-and-forget and adverse weather capability; and the "thermobaric" HELLFIRE (AGM-114N). All HELLFIRE II variants have been used successfully in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), with more than 1,000 missiles fired to date.

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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