Lockheed Martin Successfully Completes HELLFIRE Flight Test Series On Tiger Helicopter

Lockheed Martin announced the successful completion of a four-year program to integrate its precision-strike HELLFIRE(R) II missile system -- including the M299 "smart launcher" -- with its first international helicopter launch platform, Eurocopter's Tiger armed reconnaissance helicopter (ARH) for Australia.

HELLFIRE scored seven target hits in seven shots in a test series that spanned more than six months, and demonstrated its capability in multiple flight/launch scenarios against different targets. Based on those successes, an eighth planned flight test was canceled by the customer.

The series of tests began in May 2005 under the auspices of Australian Aerospace and with the cooperation of Australia's Defence Materiel Organisation (DMO), the Australian Army, Eurocopter and Sagem (manufacturer of the sight), and the U.S. Army. It was conducted in two phases at Woomera, South Australia, using multiple launch scenarios and various targets to test approaches, ranges, altitudes and speeds, during daylight and nighttime conditions.

"We met all of our objectives to qualify HELLFIRE on the Tiger," said Andy Marshall, international program manager for Air-to-Ground Missile Systems at Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control in Orlando, FL. "The missile's 100- percent performance engaging, launching and impacting targets gives the Tiger a capability it has not had before and that no other weapon system can give it.

"These tests represent the capstone event of a four-year integration program by Lockheed Martin and Australian Aerospace to qualify HELLFIRE for firing from Eurocopter's ARH Tiger by the Australian Army, and it could not have been more successful," continued Marshall. "The results clearly demonstrate that the Tiger and HELLFIRE together make a formidable weapon system, providing the Australian Army capabilities previously not available."

The first firing, on May 28, 2005, demonstrated successful separation of an inert warhead missile from its platform, which, in lock-on-before-launch (LOBL) mode, scored a bulls-eye on the target, a simulated armored personnel carrier (APC).

During the second phase, which began in November 2005, two more successful LOBL firings were conducted using inert warheads, with launches from different angles, heights and speeds.

Continuing into December, four successful lock-on-after-launch (LOAL) firings demonstrated successful performance day and night, from 6 to 8 km, with self- and remote designation. Two of these flights included live warheads; three were against simulated APCs, and one target was a simulated building.

The HELLFIRE(R) II Modular Missile System family provides multi-mission, multi-target capability with precision-strike lethality and fire-and-forget survivability. It is the primary air-to-ground precision weapon for the U.S. military as well as the armed forces of 16 other nations.

The HELLFIRE family includes three precision-strike variations using a semi-active laser (SAL) seeker to home in on the target: (1) the high- explosive anti-tank (HEAT) missile (AGM-114K), which defeats all known and projected armored threats; (2) the blast fragmentation missile (AGM-114M), which defeats "soft" targets such as buildings, bunkers, light-armored vehicles and caves; and (3) the metal augmented charge (MAC), or "thermobaric" HELLFIRE (AGM-114N), which defeats enclosures and enemy personnel housed therein, with minimal collateral damage. The fourth variant is the millimeter-wave (MMW) radar Longbow HELLFIRE (AGM-114L), which provides fire- and-forget and adverse weather capability.

All four HELLFIRE II variants have been used successfully in Afghanistan and Iraq, with more than 1,000 missiles fired to date.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 135,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services.

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