Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense Weapon System Gains Fleet Certification

The U.S. Navy and the Missile Defense Agency have certified the latest version of the Lockheed Martin-developed Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) Weapon System for tactical deployment.

The upgraded Aegis BMD Weapon System, version BMD 3.6, enhances the ballistic missile defense capabilities of the current Aegis BMD fleet, adds capability in other warfare areas and brings the BMD mission to additional destroyers and cruisers.

"It is my belief that in the future the national command authority will ask where the Aegis ballistic missile defense ships are," said Rear Adm. Alan Hicks, program director of Aegis BMD. "This certification is a vote of confidence that resonates from the Sailors operating these ships to the President, who will rely on Aegis BMD's performance."

Aegis BMD first went to sea with an initial Long Range Surveillance and Track capability in September 2004. Aegis BMD has built a record of success in various tests, including seven ballistic missile intercepts and nearly a dozen successful ballistic missile defense system tracking tests.

The newly certified version, Aegis BMD 3.6 and the SM-3 Block IA missile, completed a series of evaluations and demonstrations leading up to certification. The most prominent demonstration of Aegis BMD 3.6's capability was the June 2006 Stellar Predator Campaign which included an intercept of a ballistic missile target's separating warhead in a test at the Pacific Missile Range Facility.

During the test, the Aegis SPY-1B radar aboard USS Shiloh provided real-time detection, tracking, target discrimination and engagement processing to launch the SM-3. The Aegis BMD Weapon System continued to track the target and provide guidance information to the SM-3 to intercept the target. Other features of the weapon system were also demonstrated in the campaign including some self defense against air targets in clear and jamming environments.

"System engineering excellence continues to be the hallmark of the Aegis program," said Orlando Carvalho, vice president and general manager of Lockheed Martin's Surface-Sea Based Missile Defense line of business. "This certification is the latest testament to that engineering excellence as we provide the Navy and the Missile Defense Agency with a ballistic missile defense system that is mobile, global, linked and always at the ready."

The Missile Defense Agency and the U.S. Navy are jointly developing Aegis BMD as part of the nation's Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS). Ultimately 15 Aegis destroyers and three Aegis cruisers will be outfitted with the capability to conduct engagement of short and medium range ballistic missile threats and Long Range Surveillance & Track (LRS&T) using the Aegis BMD Weapon System and the SM-3. Japan is also in the process of working with the U.S. to incorporate BMD capability into their Aegis DDGs.

To date, 12 Aegis destroyers have been upgraded with the LRS&T capability and one Aegis cruiser has been outfitted with the engagement and LRS&T capability. Two more Aegis cruisers and three destroyers will be modified to include this capability by the end of 2006.

The Aegis Weapon System is the world's premier naval surface defense system and is the foundation for Aegis BMD, the primary component of the sea-based element of the United States' BMDS. The Aegis BMD Weapon System seamlessly integrates the SPY-1 radar, the MK 41 Vertical Launching System, the SM-3 missile and the weapon system's command and control system. The Aegis BMD Weapon System also integrates with the BMDS, receiving cues from and providing cueing information to other BMDS elements.

The Aegis Weapon System is currently deployed on 80 ships around the globe with more than 25 additional ships planned or under contract. In addition to the U.S., Aegis is the maritime weapon system of choice for Japan, South Korea, Norway, Spain and Australia. Japan will begin installation of Aegis BMD in its Kongo class Aegis destroyers in 2007.

Lockheed Martin is a world leader in systems integration and the development of air and missile defense systems and technologies, including the first operational hit-to-kill missile defense system, PAC-3. It also has considerable experience in interceptor systems, kill vehicles, battle management command, control and communications, precision pointing and tracking optics, as well as radar and other sensors that enable signal processing and data fusion. The company makes significant contributions to nearly all major U.S. Missile Defense Systems and participates in several global missile defense partnerships.

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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