Lockheed Martin's HIMARS Launcher Successfully Fires Air Defense Missile

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A Lockheed Martin High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launcher successfully fired two Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM) during a U.S. Army "common launcher" feasibility demonstration at White Sands Missile Range, NM. U.S. Army and industry representatives conducted the "proof of concept" firing to examine the viability of firing an air defense missile from the currently-fielded HIMARS.

(Photo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20090325/DA88936)

The demonstration featured two modified AMRAAMs, which were rail-launched from a modified Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) enclosure assembly launch pod mounted on a HIMARS launcher. The test, in which all objectives were met, included the operational test missiles (configured from excess AMRAAM assets); integration of modified Surfaced Launched AMRAAM launch rails into an empty ATACMS pod; and the launch of the AMRAAMs using the HIMARS fire control system with modified software.

The Army is evaluating HIMARS as a potential solution for a light "common launcher" for future air defense, Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System and ATACMS munitions. In addition to its capability to support multi-mission munitions, the HIMARS launcher offers tactical flexibility, high reliability and C-130 transportability.

"We're looking at the idea of a 'common launcher,'" said Col. Dave Rice, U.S. Army Project Manager, Precision Fires Rocket & Missile Systems. "We're looking at HIMARS because it is already in the force, it's very deployable, it's a great platform to be a common launcher, and we've now shown it can successfully fire air defense missiles."

The U.S. Army's Air Defense Artillery and Field Artillery branch schools are now consolidated under a single Fires Center of Excellence at Fort Sill, OK, resulting in areas of commonality between the two combat arms branches. The "common launcher" concept is one example where both air defense artillery and field artillery operational needs are jointly addressed.

"We believe this test firing shows that HIMARS is a feasible 'common launcher' candidate," said Scott Arnold, vice president for Precision Fires at Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control. "We've shown we can effectively modify the onboard fire control software and successfully fire air defense missiles from this reliable and deployable system that is already in the hands of the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps."

The demonstration was a coordinated effort between the U.S. Army Program Executive Office Missiles and Space, Precision Fires Rocket and Missile Systems, Cruise Missile Defense Systems, Prototype Integration Facility, Raytheon Missile Systems and Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 146,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2008 sales of $42.7 billion.

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