MEADS Completes CDR And Is Ready For Flight Test

The Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS) program has completed an extensive series of Critical Design Review (CDR) events with a Summary CDR at MEADS International in Orlando, FL. The program team's focus now moves to final build, integration and test activities leading to flight tests involving all system elements at White Sands Missile Range, NM, in 2012.

In total, the MEADS program has presented and successfully demonstrated more than 1,000 design evaluation criteria in a rigorous series of incremental review events that began more than two years ago. Reviewers from Germany, Italy, the United States and the NATO MEADS Management Agency (NAMEADSMA) progressively evaluated the MEADS design criteria in a series of 47 multi-day reviews. With completion of MEADS end item reviews in August 2009, a system-level review sequence of 16 events examined architecture, survivability, logistics, security, test and evaluation, performance and cost.

"No modern air and missile defense design has been as thoroughly evaluated as MEADS, but this comprehensive multinational examination ensures that MEADS will reliably protect German, Italian and American soldiers and airmen from tactical missile and airborne threats far into the future," said MEADS International Executive Vice President Klaus Riedel.

Under development by Germany, Italy and the United States, MEADS is a ground mobile air and missile defense (AMD) system that will replace Patriot in the United States and Nike Hercules in Italy. It will replace Patriot and the retired Hawk system in Germany. The system is designed to permit full interoperability between the U.S. and allied forces, and it is the only medium-range AMD system to provide full 360-degree coverage.

MEADS has been shown to defend up to eight times the area with a fraction of the system elements used by fielded systems. MEADS also deploys more quickly and repositions easily with ability for fire units to be tailored for individual mission requirements. Substantial cost savings result because MEADS has been designed for higher reliability and will reduce both the number of deployed personnel and the demand for airlift.

"There's a clear advantage over the older system designs that MEADS will replace," said MEADS International President Steve Barnoske. "Not only does MEADS get to the theater more quickly and keep up with maneuver forces, it requires fewer vehicles and personnel yet increases protection against 21st century threats."

NAMEADSMA General Manager Gregory Kee said, "MEADS is timely and needed in today's threat environment. No other air and missile defense system is as flexible, agile or lethal against the evolving threats that our adversaries are developing."

Hardware design for each MEADS Major End Item (MEI) was approved through the MEI-level reviews in August 2009, clearing the program to fabricate end items. System elements are now undergoing integration and test in System Integration Laboratories in the U.S. and Europe, and are on track to begin flight tests at White Sands Missile Range in 2012.

MEADS will meet challenging new requirements not addressed by any previous or planned Air and Missile Defense system. The system will combine superior battlefield protection with extensive flexibility, allowing it to protect maneuver forces and critical assets against tactical ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles and aircraft. It also provides an open architecture for 21st century air and missile defense system-of-system integration capabilities that allow operational mission-tailoring. MEADS is designed to provide greater firepower with less manpower than current systems, producing dramatic operation and support cost savings.

A multinational joint venture headquartered in Orlando, FL, MEADS International's participating companies are MBDA in Italy, LFK in Germany and Lockheed Martin in the United States. Today, 1,800 employees from these companies are developing MEADS, which is closely watched as a model program for collaborative transatlantic development.

The United States funds 58 percent of the MEADS program, and European partners Germany and Italy provide 25 percent and 17 percent respectively as partners in the NATO Medium Extended Air Defense System Management Organization (NAMEADSMO). Its program management agency NAMEADSMA is located in Huntsville, AL.

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