First MEADS Battle Manager Ready For System Tests At Italian Air Force Base

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ORLANDO, Fla., MUNICH and ROME, Dec. 20, 2010 /PRNewswire/ -- The Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS) program today displayed the first MEADS Battle Manager during ceremonies at MBDA Italia facilities in Fusaro, Italy. The Battle Manager, configured on an ARIS Italian Prime Mover, will shortly be joined by other MEADS major end items at Pratica di Mare Air Force Base in Italy as part of system integration activities leading to flight tests at White Sands Missile Range, NM, in 2012.

Five more Battle Managers are being assembled to support integration, test and qualification activities for the flight test series.

Using standardized interfaces and a revolutionary network-centric open architecture, the MEADS Battle Manager can command and control both MEADS and non-MEADS sensors and launchers. Through a capability called "plug-and-fight," sensors, launchers, and other battle managers simply act as nodes on the MEADS network. A commander can dynamically add or subtract these elements as the situation dictates without shutting the system down. This unprecedented flexibility is a first for ground-based air and missile defense systems.

MEADS International Technical Director Claudio Ponzi said, "We're very proud of our battle manager team for achieving this significant milestone, which realizes the visionary requirements given to the MEADS program. The MEADS architecture and Battle Manager provide capability to integrate unlimited combinations of sensors and weapons into a single network."

With MEADS, a commander can dynamically extract MEADS elements to protect a fast-moving maneuver force. The Minimum Engagement Capability requires only one launcher, one battle manager, and one fire control radar. When more MEADS elements arrive, they automatically and seamlessly join the network and build out capability.

NAMEADSMA General Manager Gregory Kee said, "The MEADS Battle Manager will provide commanders with increased situational awareness, but more importantly, increased flexibility to tailor battle elements dynamically based on the battlefield situation. Additionally, MEADS will be interoperable with a wide range of legacy systems as well as current and future command and control systems, like NATO's Air Command and Control System."

MEADS was shown to defend up to 8 times the coverage area with far fewer system assets. This allows for a substantial reduction in deployed personnel and equipment, and demand on airlift.

In August, the MEADS program completed an extensive series of Critical Design Review events with a Summary Critical Design Review at MEADS International in Orlando, FL. The program is now focused on final build, integration and test activities leading to flight tests involving all system elements at White Sands Missile Range in 2012.

Under development by Germany, Italy and the United States, MEADS is a mobile 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 air defense system to provide full 360-degree coverage.

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.

MEADS International, a multinational joint venture headquartered in Orlando, FL, is the prime contractor for MEADS. Major subcontractors and joint venture partners are MBDA in Italy, LFK in Germany and Lockheed Martin in the United States. Today, 1,800 employees from these companies are completing development of 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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