

Skunk Works® Demonstrates Airborne Battle Management Of AI-Controlled Aircraft



A battle manager sends real-time commands to AI-controlled aircraft during a flight test over Iowa.

IOWA CITY, Iowa, Nov. 21, 2024 [/PRNewswire/](#) -- Lockheed Martin Skunk Works® (NYSE: LMT), in partnership with Lockheed Martin's Demonstrations and Prototypes organization and the University of Iowa's Operator Performance Laboratory (OPL), showcased a crewed-uncrewed teaming mission where an airborne battle manager issued real-time commands to AI-controlled aircraft through a touchscreen pilot vehicle interface (PVI).

In a series of flight tests, the Skunk Works and OPL teams simulated an offensive counter air mission where an airborne, human "battle manager" aboard an L-39 Albatros assigned targets to two AI-controlled L-29 Delfin jets, which then worked together to defeat two mock enemy jets using simulated mission systems and weapons.

"The work we're doing with the University of Iowa's OPL is foundational for the future of air combat, where a family of crewed and uncrewed systems will work together to execute complex missions," said John Clark, vice president and general manager, Lockheed Martin Skunk Works. "We're excited to leverage our diverse skillsets to advance all elements of this new way of operating."

These flight tests build on previous experiments that demonstrated AI-controlled air-to-ground jamming and geolocation. This year, the tests shifted to AI in air-to-air combat, where AI sends commands directly to the planes' autopilots. This is the third test of this type and the first to include a real-time human battle manager overseeing the AI's actions.

Skunk Works is dedicated to enabling crewed-uncrewed teaming to optimize operational flexibility, abbreviate data-to-decision timelines and improve pilot safety. We continue to invest in collaborative enablers to keep our customers ahead of emerging threats.

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