

Rapid Dragon Demonstrates Palletized Munition Capability In First C-17 And EC-130 System-Level Demonstrations

High above the New Mexico desert, mobility aircraft air-launched surrogate cruise missiles in the first demonstration of a palletized strike mission

ORLANDO, Fla., Sept. 21, 2021 – In partnership with the Air Force, Lockheed Martin (NYSE: LMT) recently deployed Rapid Dragon munition pallets from C-17 and EC-130 aircraft and released surrogate [JASSM-ERs](#) in system-level flights conducted over White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico. Rapid Dragon is a fast-paced U.S. Air Force Strategic Development Planning and Experimentation (SDPE) program that has moved from concept to surrogate missile deployment in just 10 months.

“These Rapid Dragon deployments represent the first end-to-end demonstration of a palletized strike mission, from rolling missile pallets onto an aircraft to in-flight missile release,” said Scott Callaway, Lockheed Martin Advanced Strike Programs director. “They are a big step toward showing the feasibility of the palletized munitions concept and the ability of mobility aircraft to augment the strike capacity of tactical fighters and strategic bombers.”

The Rapid Dragon team conducted an airdrop from a C-17A Globemaster III and another from an EC-130SJ Commando Solo. In both flights, aircrews deployed a pallet at an operationally relevant altitude. Once stabilized by parachutes, the pallets released surrogate missiles in quick succession, each aerodynamically identical to a JASSM-ER.

A ground crew transmitted new targeting information to the Rapid Dragon system during both flights via beyond line-of-sight communications. The ability to retarget missiles while the aircraft is airborne provides combatant commanders the flexibility to respond to changes in a dynamic operational environment.

SDPE and Lockheed Martin are conducting additional tests in coming months, culminating in an MC-130J airdrop of a real JASSM-ER under powered flight by the end of 2021.

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