MISSILE DEFENSE AGENCY

News Release

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Laser Module Installation Completed Aboard Airborne Laser Aircraft

Lt. General Henry A. “Trey” Obering, Missile Defense Agency director, announced today that all six chemical oxygen iodine laser (COIL) modules have been installed aboard the Airborne Laser (ABL) aircraft. The ABL is being developed as a potential element of the nation’s ballistic missile defense system, and is the first to use directed energy to destroy ballistic missiles in their “boost” phase of flight.

The six COIL modules form the heart of the ABL’s megawatt-class chemical laser. Each module is roughly the size of a Mini Cooper automobile, and altogether the size of a large sport utility vehicle. The COIL sits in the rear of the highly modified 747-400F ABL aircraft. The modules house the chemical reactions required to generate the energy necessary to destroy a ballistic missile in flight. The COIL was successfully tested on the ground in 2005, demonstrating operationally significant power levels and lase durations. Since then, each module has been disassembled and refurbished in preparation for fully integrated ground testing this summer.

Although significant work remains before ground tests can begin, this phase of the COIL installation process represents a major step toward the ABL’s planned lethal demonstration against a boosting missile in 2009.

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