Photo Release -- Northrop Grumman Proposes Skyguard High-Energy Laser System For Layered Commercial Aircraft Counter-MANPADs Protection

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REDONDO BEACH, Calif., Jul 18, 2006 (PRIMEZONE via COMTEX News Network) -- Northrop Grumman Corporation (NYSE:NOC) formally proposed a ground-based, high-energy laser system, Skyguard, as part of a layered airport defense against the man-portable air defense systems (MANPADs) threat to commercial aviation.

A photo accompanying this news release is available at: http://media.primezone.com/noc/

The company submitted its proposal to the Department of Homeland Security, Science and Technology Directorate, Counter-MANPADs System Program Office, which is conducting an assessment program to evaluate and demonstrate emerging technology solutions that prove to be the most mature and promising in defeating the MANPAD threats to commercial aviation.

"Northrop Grumman is developing a range of approaches to provide a layered defense for airport security," said Alexis Livanos, president of Northrop Grumman's Space Technology sector. "Our company has the unique capabilities required for this vital homeland security program. We offer the aircraft-based Directional Infrared Countermeasure (DIRCM) system, which the Department of Homeland Security is currently evaluating, in addition to the ground-based, high-energy laser system we proposed."

In the near-term, DIRCM can be installed on the most vulnerable aircraft, the company noted. As the threat of attack continues to increase and new, more capable types of threat systems are introduced, however, the company said a layered defense can substantially help mitigate the danger to commercial aviation.

Skyguard uses a high-energy laser to physically destroy a wide range of anti-aircraft threats in the airport region, even with very short launch ranges, according to Mike McVey, vice president of Directed Energy Systems for Northrop Grumman. He noted that Skyguard technology is the only proven and tested non-DIRCM solution and is available in less than two years once a contract is received at approximately $30 million for each system.

Based on technology proven by the Tactical High Energy Laser (THEL) testbed at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., Skyguard has the specific capabilities needed to defeat supersonic threats, including speed-of-light operation, extreme precision, proven lethality and demonstrated operational safety, according to McVey. He noted that THEL has shot down dozens of rockets in flight since 2000, including 122 mm Katyusha rockets, short-range ballistic missiles, artillery and several calibers of mortars.

Compatible with a range of packaging options, the Skyguard laser system would be placed at or near an airport to detect, track and destroy a variety of threats. This capability will handle a full range of infrared seeker systems, and also is uniquely effective against command-guided missiles and other threats known to be in growing terrorist inventories, McVey added.

The Department of Homeland Security stated that the approaches it will evaluate in this procurement are limited to ground-based systems and aircraft-borne non-DIRCM systems. These will involve alternative approaches employing emerging technologies that may have the potential for defeating MANPADs in a layered defense environment.

Congress has funded the Department of Homeland Security to assess alternative approaches to the current onboard DIRCM system demonstration currently underway, which the agency said is going very well.

Northrop Grumman Space Technology, based in Redondo Beach, Calif., has been developing and demonstrating high-energy laser weapon systems for more than 30 years, paving the way for the U.S. to incorporate them across all services, including ships, manned and unmanned aircraft, and ground vehicles.

(Photo: http://www.primezone.com/newsroom/prs/?pkgid=2736)

Northrop Grumman Corporation is a global defense company headquartered in Los Angeles, Calif. Northrop Grumman provides technologically advanced, innovative products, services and solutions in systems integration, defense electronics, information technology, advanced aircraft, shipbuilding and space technology. With more than 120,000 employees and operations in all 50 states and 25 countries, Northrop Grumman serves U.S. and international military, government and commercial customers.

SOURCE: Northrop Grumman Corp.

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