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BAE SYSTEMS LIGHTWEIGHT HOWITZER COMPLETES AIRLIFT TESTS

WASHINGTON -- BAE Systems Lightweight Howitzer (M777E1) has completed a series of airlift tests with the U.S. Marine Corps MV-22 tiltrotor aircraft. The tests were conducted at the U.S. Army's Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., June 25 and Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C., June 30.

During the first test, the M777E1's position location capability was evaluated by operating the digital fire control system while the MV-22 maintained horizontal speeds of up to 130 knots. The demonstration illustrates that the howitzer will be ready to fire as soon as it arrives in a landing zone. The M777E1 was also assessed to be an extremely stable external cargo load during testing.

The second test assessed the howitzer's ability to withstand airlift of at least 50 nautical miles; achieving a total flight distance of 69 nautical miles. The howitzer's lightweight characteristic -- only 9800 lbs. -- enables the M777E1 to be externally carried by the MV-22. The current M198 howitzer, now in service, weighs almost 17,000 lbs. and restricts its airlift to larger helicopters. The ability of the M777E1 to be carried by the MV-22 provides increased flexibility for the Marine Air Ground Task Force in executing Ship-To-Objective-Maneuver.

The M777E1 is replacing all M198 howitzers in the Marine Corps inventory. The first Marine artillery unit equipped with the M777 will achieve operational capability during the Spring of 2005.

The M777E1 is currently in low-rate initial production from BAE Systems facility in Hattiesburg, Miss. Full rate production is scheduled to begin in early 2005.

About BAE SYSTEMS:

BAE Systems is an international company engaged in the development, delivery, and support of advanced defense and aerospace systems in the air, on land, at sea, and in space. The company designs, manufactures, and supports military aircraft, surface ships, submarines, radar, avionics, communications, electronics, and guided weapon systems. It is a pioneer in technology with a heritage stretching back hundreds of years. It is at the forefront of innovation, working to develop the next generation of intelligent defense systems.

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