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Tenth Interceptor Emplaced for the Ballistic Missile Defense System

Air Force Lt. Gen. Henry "Trey" Obering III, U.S. Missile Defense Agency director, said today that the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) element of the Missile Defense Agency emplaced the eighth interceptor missile designed to intercept and destroy a long-range ballistic missile into its underground silo at Ft. Greely, Alaska on December 18. Two interceptors are emplaced at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.

This is the final interceptor emplacement planned for Ft. Greely this year. Another interceptor missile will be emplaced in January 2006, followed by additional interceptors by the end of 2006. The interceptors are part of an integrated system of ground, sea and space-based sensors, ground and sea-based radars and an advanced command and control, battle management and communication system designed to detect and track a hostile ballistic missile, then launch and guide an interceptor to destroy the target warhead before it can reach its intended target in any of our 50 states. The system is continuing with an extensive "shakedown" of all components prior to attaining full-time operational status. The Missile Defense Agency, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Northern Command are all involved in the "shakedown" process. In the interest of operational security, future interceptor emplacements will not be announced.

On December 13, an operationally configured interceptor missile was successfully launched from the Ronald Reagan Test Site at Kwajalein Atoll in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. All test objectives were met, and MDA is preparing for a number of tests in 2006 that will involve for the first time the launch of interceptor missiles from Vandenberg AFB, an operational site. The tests will include intercepts against both real and simulated targets. Kodiak Island, Alaska will be the site of target missile launches during tests calling for an actual target.



PHOTO CAPTION: The eighth Ground-based Interceptor missile is lowered into its underground silo at Ft. Greely on December 18, 2005. The interceptor is part of a missile defense system designed to intercept and destroy a long-range ballistic missiles.