



News Release

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Missile Defense Flight Test Successfully Completed

Air Force Lt. General Henry "Trey" Obering, Missile Defense Agency director, announced today the successful completion of an important test involving the launch of an operationally-configured Ground-based Interceptor missile designed to protect the United States against a limited long-range ballistic missile attack. The flight test results will help to further improve and refine the performance of numerous Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) elements that will be used to provide a defense against the type of long-range ballistic missile that could be used to attack an American city with a weapon of mass destruction.

The interceptor missile was launched at approximately 3:04 p.m. (local time, December 14); (10:04 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, December 13) from the Ronald Reagan Test Site, Republic of the Marshall Islands, in the central Pacific Ocean. For this exercise, there was a simulated launch of a target missile from Kodiak, Alaska using data from previous launches.

The test was primarily designed to evaluate the performance of the interceptor missile's rocket motor system and exoatmospheric kill vehicle, which is the component that collides directly with a target warhead in space to perform a "hit-to-kill" intercept using only the force of the collision to totally destroy the target warhead. Initial indications are that the rocket motor system and kill vehicle performed well.

The test also successfully tested a wide variety of components and subcomponents as part of the evaluation of system performance, including improved missile silo support equipment, booster/kill vehicle separation, kill vehicle cryogenic sensor cooling, kill vehicle orientation and positioning, and several others.

The Ground-based Midcourse Defense system currently has seven interceptors deployed at Ft. Greely and two at Vandenberg AFB, Calif. Two additional interceptor missiles are scheduled for deployment at Ft. Greely by the end of this year, and additional interceptors will be fielded at Ft. Greely over the next two years. Other components of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense currently include the upgraded Cobra Dane radar in the Aleutian Island chain of Alaska, and upgraded early warning radars at Beale AFB, Calif. and at Fylingdales in the United Kingdom. Up to four forward deployed air-transportable X-band radars are also planned for the system, as well as an upgrade to the existing early warning radar at Thule Air Base in Greenland. A new sea-based X-band radar mounted aboard a large sea-going platform began its transit in November to its operating base at Adak, Alaska in the Aleutian Islands. It will have the capability to operate in any ocean to support both operations and testing.

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