



News Release

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Missile Defense Agency to Dedicate Missile Defense Site to President Ronald W. Reagan

Air Force Lt. General Henry "Trey" Obering, Missile Defense Agency director, today announced plans to formally dedicate the missile defense facilities at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. as the "Ronald W. Reagan Missile Defense Site" to honor the 40th President of the United States for his commitment to advance the development of missile defense technologies to protect and defend the United States, its deployed forces and our allies and friends from ballistic missile attack.

A dedication ceremony at Vandenberg AFB is scheduled for April 10, 2006. Former First Lady Nancy Reagan will formally dedicate the missile defense site and unveil a bust and plaque in honor of the late President at a site overlooking the missile defense complex and the Pacific Ocean. Other distinguished attendees will include Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England, former California Governor and U.S. Senator Pete Wilson, and Senator Ted Stevens (Alaska).

In a landmark speech on March 23, 1983, President Reagan noted the lack of any type of missile defense to protect our nation, and called upon the American scientific and technical community to strive for a way to intercept and destroy ballistic missiles before they could reach their intended targets. In his speech he said, "I know this is a formidable, technical task...yet, current technology has attained a level of sophistication where it's reasonable for us to begin this effort. It will take years, probably decades of efforts on many fronts. There will be failures and setbacks, just as there will be successes and breakthroughs."

President Reagan's establishment of the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization brought together the nation's best scientists, engineers and missile technology experts. Due to his vision and commitment, our nation has developed and fielded the initial elements of the first missile defense system capable of defending all 50 states against a limited long-range ballistic missile attack. As President Reagan predicted, there have been failures, but there has also been much success. President Reagan's vision has been endorsed by all his successors, as well as continuing support by the Congress. The events of September 11, 2001 tragically exhibited the intention and will of those who wish to do harm to America using any means at their disposal. The growing proliferation of ballistic missile technology, combined with efforts by hostile nations to acquire nuclear, chemical and biological weapons for use with these missiles, demonstrates the need to meet this threat to the best of our ability, and with the necessary resources to accomplish the mission.

The Ronald W. Reagan missile defense site consists of a complex that includes four silos currently housing two interceptor missiles that, when activated, will serve as part of the overall Ballistic Missile Defense System. The other two silos will be used for operationally realistic testing, but can also hold operational interceptors if required. The missile defense complex at Vandenberg AFB is one of two installations in the United States with long-range interceptor missiles. Ft. Greely, Alaska is the other missile defense site, and currently has nine interceptor missiles fielded, with plans to emplace additional interceptors over the next three years. The current missile defense system also includes early warning satellites, powerful ground and sea-based radars and an integrated command, control, battle management and communication element to detect the launch of a hostile missile, track its flight and provide the necessary targeting information to the interceptor missile to destroy the target missile high in space using only the direct collision of the interceptor with the target warhead, or "hit to kill" technology.

The plaque to be unveiled at the dedication ceremony contains the following excerpt from President Reagan's speech on March 23, 1983: "Wouldn't it be better to save lives than to avenge them? Are we not capable of demonstrating our peaceful intentions by applying all of our abilities and our ingenuity to achieving a truly lasting stability? I think we are indeed. Indeed, we must."

Contact: Rick Lehner, Missile Defense Agency, at (703) 697-8997. News media requesting to attend the ceremony at Vandenberg AFB should contact the 30th Space Wing Public Affairs Office at (805) 606-4000.