



News Release

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Missile Defense Agency Conducts Successful Interceptor "Fly-Out" Test

Lieutenant General Henry "Trey" Obering, Missile Defense Agency director, announced today the successful completion June 26, 2007 of an important test exercise of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense element of the Ballistic Missile Defense System. The test involved the launch and "fly-out" of a THAAD interceptor missile in a highly-stressing low-endosphere (inside the atmosphere) environment. This was the lowest altitude fly-out of a THAAD interceptor to date, and demonstrated its ability to operate in a high-dynamic pressure environment with aero heating effects. Operating at this point in the battlespace (the distance between the hostile missile launch and the location of the interceptor missile), THAAD fills a gap between the mobile ground-based Patriot PAC-3 and the Aegis/Standard Missile-3 sea-based missile defense in the layered, integrated Ballistic Missile Defense System, providing the warfighter with more robust "defense-in-depth" against short- and medium- range ballistic missiles attacks.

The test, conducted at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, involved the launch and "fly-out" of a THAAD interceptor missile, and an initial review indicated that the planned flight test objectives were achieved. This test did not involve a target, and was a controlled flight test intended to verify missile design and performance in a low-endoatmospheric environment.

This was the final THAAD interceptor mission planned for the White Sands Missile Range, as all future tests will take place at the Pacific Missile Range Facility, Kauai, Hawaii.

THAAD is the first weapon system with both endo-atmospheric (inside the atmosphere) and exo-atmospheric (outside the atmosphere) capability developed specifically to defend against short, medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles. The THAAD system will provide high-altitude missile defense over a larger area than the complementary Patriot system, and, like the Patriot, intercepts a ballistic missile target in the "terminal" phase of flight—the final minute or so when the hostile missile falls toward the earth at the end of its flight. THAAD uses "hit to kill" technology, using only the force of a direct impact with the target to destroy it.

The Ballistic Missile Defense System now in development and testing will be capable of providing a layered defense for the U.S. homeland, its deployed forces, friends and allies against ballistic missiles of all ranges in all phases of flight. The higher-altitude and theater-wide protection offered by THAAD provides more protection of larger areas than lower-tier systems like Patriot alone. THAAD can be transported by air to wherever it is needed worldwide, and consists of radar, fire control unit, missile launchers, and interceptor missiles.

The THAAD Program is managed by the Missile Defense Agency in Washington, DC, and executed by the THAAD Project Office in Huntsville, Ala. Lockheed Martin Corporation is the prime contractor.

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