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Missile Defense Agency Presents Ronald W. Reagan Award to Rear Admiral Wayne E. Meyer

Lt. General Henry A. "Trey" Obering, Missile Defense Agency director, presented retired U.S. Navy Rear Admiral Wayne E. Meyer with the sixth annual Ronald W. Reagan Missile Defense Award during a ceremony on April 2, 2008.

Admiral Meyer, the widely respected "Father of the Aegis Weapon System," received the award in recognition of his vision, dedication, commitment and management skills as the founding project manager of the Aegis Shipbuilding Project Office and who led the effort to design, build and deploy Aegis-class cruisers and destroyers that are the backbone of not only fleet air defense, but also serve as the sea-based component of the nation's Ballistic Missile Defense System. He retired from the Navy in 1985 as the Deputy Commander for Weapons and Combat Systems, Naval Sea Systems Command and Ordnance Officer of the Navy after serving more than four decades as both an enlisted sailor and as a Naval officer.

The U.S. Missile Defense Agency and the U.S. Navy have jointly developed a ballistic missile defense capability that is now being fielded aboard Aegis cruisers and destroyers. The combination of the SPY-1 radar and fire control system of the Aegis Weapon System with the Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) sea-based interceptor missile has resulted in a new capability to intercept short to medium range ballistic missiles during the midcourse phase of their flight, destroying them using only the force of a direct collision between the SM-3's kinetic warhead and the hostile ballistic missile. Since intercept testing began in 2002, the SM-3 has successfully destroyed 12 targets in 14 tests, including one test in 2007 involving the successful intercept of two targets by two SM-3 missiles. Due to Admiral Meyer's work on system design, the inherent capability and flexibility of the Aegis Weapon System will allow the Missile Defense Agency and the U.S. Navy to upgrade and improve the weapon system to meet future threats. By the end of 2008, three Aegis cruisers and 15 destroyers will be equipped with upgraded radars and fire control systems and the SM-3 interceptor for the ballistic missile defense mission. On February 20, 2008, a modified SM-3 interceptor was used to engage a de-orbiting U.S. satellite that was carrying a highly toxic fuel that could have endangered people on earth if it landed in a populated area. The SM-3 scored a direct hit on the satellite's fuel tank, dissipating the hydrazine fuel harmlessly in space.

A native of Brunswick, Missouri, Admiral Meyer graduated from the University of Kansas in 1946 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering. He also holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering and a Master of Science degree in Astronautics and Aeronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School.

After serving aboard numerous Navy ships as a surface warfare officer specializing in surface guided missile systems and shore duty developing and managing advanced weapon system designs, in 1970 Admiral Meyer reported to the Naval Ordnance Systems Command as the manager for the new Aegis Weapon System that was beginning development. His management effort centered on three functional cornerstones: Detect, Control, Engage, and five operational cornerstones: Reaction Time, Firepower, Electronic Countermeasure and Environmental Immunity, Continuous System Availability and Area Coverage.

His efforts led to the installation of the Aegis Weapon System aboard the first ship designed specifically to utilize the weapon system, the cruiser USS TICONDEROGA (CG-47), which was commissioned in January, 1983. A second class of Aegis-equipped ships, destroyers, became the USS ARLEIGH BURKE (DDG-51), which was commissioned in July, 1991.

On November 27, 2006, the Chief of Naval Operations announced that the USS WAYNE E. MEYER (DDG-108) is named in his honor. She will be the 85th Aegis ship to be constructed and includes the 100th Aegis system to be delivered to the Navy. The planned commissioning will take place next year. Aegis is the longest continuous shipbuilding project in the history of the U.S. Navy.

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