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Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) Battery Activation

The activation of the first Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) ballistic missile defense interceptor missile unit of the U.S. Army was recognized during a ceremony today at Fort Bliss, Texas. THAAD is a missile defense system developed by the Missile Defense Agency, a joint service organization within the Department of Defense.

The ceremony marked the establishment of an operational Army unit that will include soldiers who are undergoing new equipment training on THAAD and who will ultimately work to field the system. Alpha Battery/4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 11th Air Defense Brigade, 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command, will receive 24 THAAD interceptors, three launchers, a fire control and communications unit and a radar. The commander of the new battery is Capt. Curtis Zervic. Soldiers in the newly established battery have been training on the THAAD equipment since last month and will continue their training through the middle of 2009.

THAAD has undergone several years of rigorous testing, designed to push the system into increasingly stressful and operationally realistic scenarios. Since the current round of testing began, THAAD has intercepted every target it has flown against. When fielded, the mobile THAAD system will be the only defensive weapon that can destroy incoming ballistic missiles both inside and just outside the earth's atmosphere. It will provide protection to deployed troops around the world, and other important assets and population centers against short to medium range ballistic missiles in the terminal, or final phase of flight. THAAD is an element of the layered, integrated Ballistic Missile Defense System designed to protect the United States, our allies and friends against all types of ballistic missiles in all phases of flight.

The prime contractor for the THAAD missile defense element is Lockheed Martin.

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