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February 3, 2000

PAC-3 Intercept Test - Launch Postponed

The Ballistic Missile Defense Organization and the U.S. Army attempted to conduct an intercept test of the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missile at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., today. The launch was postponed at 7:11 a.m. MST because of an error in the launch sequence of the target. The time it would have taken to recycle the target, then continue the countdown, would have put the launch outside the timeframe allowed by the FAA to use the airspace. This was to be the fifth flight test of the PAC-3 system. The target and missile were not affected in any way, and the launch will be rescheduled as soon as possible.

Test objectives included demonstrating system/missile capability to engage a full-body tactical ballistic missile using remote operations which include employing the launching station several kilometers from the radar and engagement control stations; and demonstrating intercept using the tactical software which allows the seeker to select the optimal aimpoint on the target.

The PAC-3 missile is a high velocity, hit-to-kill missile and is the next generation PATRIOT missile being developed to provide increased defense capability against advanced tactical ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and hostile aircraft. The PAC-3 missile uses kinetic energy rather than an explosive warhead to destroy its targets.

The PAC-3 missile has successfully completed four missions prior to today's flight test. The first two PAC-3 developmental test (DT) missions consisted of missiles with special instrumentation packages in place of the seeker and the missions were structured to verify critical systems and missile performance prior to conducting target intercept flight tests. A seeker characterization flight (SCF) mission was conducted March 15, 1999, to test a PAC-3 missile with a seeker. Although not a primary objective of the SCF, an intercept of the target was achieved. On September 16, 1999, a second intercept test was successful. The remaining PAC-3 missions will consist of 14 PAC-3 missiles intercepting various classes of targets.

The Patriot program is managed by the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization in Washington, DC, and executed by the Army Program Executive Office for Air and Missile Defense and the Army Patriot Project Office in Huntsville, Ala. Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control, Dallas, Texas, is the prime contractor responsible for PAC-3 missile development. The seeker is produced by Boeing in Huntsville, Ala. Raytheon Systems Company, the PATRIOT system prime contractor, is the system integrator for the PAC-3 missile segment.