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Patriot PAC-3 Missile Defense Intercept Test Successful

The Ballistic Missile Defense Organization and the U.S. Army conducted a test of the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) system at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., today at 2:45 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time. Preliminary test data indicate that the PAC-3 and PAC-2 missiles intercepted their assigned targets, and all other test objectives appear to have been met.

The test included engaging and intercepting a very low altitude cruise missile target (BQM-74) at short range with a PAC-3 missile, and engaging and intercepting a low altitude sub-scale aircraft target (MQM-107) at long range with a PAC-2 missile. Soldiers from the 2-43rd Air Defense Artillery Battalion conducted this successful mission.

This completes the Developmental Test phase of the program, and allows transition into Operational Testing. Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (IOTE) is scheduled to begin in January 2002.

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. Unlike earlier Patriot missile explosive warheads, the PAC-3 missile literally collides with its target in mid-air at extremely high speed, destroying the target and neutralizing its payload.

The PAC-3 system has completed 10 flight tests prior to today s test. All were successful, with the exception of a July 9,2001 test, which was partially successful. The first two PAC-3 developmental test (DT) missions did not involve targets but 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. DT-5, conducted Feb. 5, 2000, was a successful intercept of a Hera ballistic missile target. DT-7, conducted July 22, 2000, was a successful intercept of an MQM-107 drone representing a cruise missile. Another MQM-107 was intercepted July 28, 2000 during a test not included in the developmental test program. DT-6, conducted Oct. 14, 2000, was a successful intercept of a Storm target by a PAC-3 missile with a simultaneous engagement of an MQM-107 by a PAC-2 missile. DT-8, conducted March 31, 2001, was the most complex. It involved a simultaneous engagement of a Hera ballistic missile target using two PAC-3 missiles and a Patriot missile configured as a target by a PAC-2 missile. There were five missiles (two targets and three interceptors) in the air at one time and both targets were destroyed. The most recent flight test, Developmental Test/Operational Test-9 (DT/OT-9), conducted July 9, 2001, was an attempted intercept of a theater ballistic missile and a full-scale jet aircraft with two PAC-3 missiles. The aircraft was intercepted and destroyed, but the missile intercept attempt was a miss. The remaining PAC-3 missions will involve 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 Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense Project Office in Huntsville, Ala. Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control, Dallas, Texas, is the prime contractor responsible for the PAC-3 missile segment. Raytheon Systems Company, the Patriot system prime contractor, is the system integrator for the PAC-3 missile segment.