



For Your Information

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Latest Test Helps Aegis Ships Continue March to Initial Fielding

The Missile Defense Agency and the U. S. Navy moved closer toward fielding a homeland missile defense capability by successfully completing a special event concurrent with the RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific) 2004 exercise in the Hawaiian operating area. The event, called Pacific Explorer III, held last week at the Pacific Missile Range, Barking Sands, Kauai, was the latest, in an ongoing series of exercises, in which AEGIS ships conduct Long Range Surveillance and Tracking of ballistic missiles and successfully communicated that information in support of the Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS).

The exercise was conducted under the operational guidance of Commander, Third Fleet, and included participants from U. S. Strategic Command, Northern Command, Commander, Pacific Command, and Seventh Fleet in Japan. THIRD Fleet participants included the USS Lake Erie (CG 70) and USS Paul Hamilton (DDG 60), both outfitted with special AEGIS Ballistic Missile Defense computer programs and equipment, plus F/A 18s from the aircraft carrier USS John C Stennis and a Navy Special Warfare Task Group. Other missile defense participants included the 100th MDE Brigade from Colorado Springs, CO, operating the Ground-Based Midcourse (GMD) Defense System.

In the exercise, friendly forces were threatened with ballistic missile attacks. Three-stage sounding rockets, known as AEGIS Readiness Assessment Vehicles (ARAVs), replicated the threat. Upon launch, the AEGIS ships detected and tracked the rockets, reporting the track to the BMDS system for constructive engagement by Ground-based Midcourse interceptors. The AEGIS BMD ships also directed the F/A-18s to conduct simulated attacks against the launch site. This was done in coordination with a simulated Tomahawk strike from the ships. The exercise then called for the hostile force to launch a cruise missile attack on the BMD ships. Lake Erie and Paul Hamilton, shifted mission focus to cruise missile defense and engaged the inbound cruise missiles with STANDARD Missile -2. Live drones were used to simulate the cruise missiles.

Paul Hamilton is one of fifteen Destroyers the Pacific fleet expects to have outfitted with the special AEGIS BMD equipment and computer programs over the next several years. Lake Erie and two other Navy cruisers will be outfitted with a similar surveillance capability, and the ability to engage ballistic missiles with the Standard Missile -3.



PHOTO CAPTION: A radar operator, aboard one of the Navy ships, checks his scope during a ballistic missile defense exercise off the coast of the Hawaiian island Kauai. (US Navy photo).

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