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A "First" In Operator Training

In July, for the first time, a class of soldiers training to operate the U.S. missile defense system for homeland defense passed every written and practical test on their first try during both the basic and advanced missile defense operator course held in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The eight-week courses aren't easy, especially for newly-activated soldiers from the National Guard who may have just come from working in the civilian world as a policeman or construction worker. The challenging course consists of approximately 144 hours of classroom and hands-on training. It is designed to provide a mastery of the missile defense system, and includes intensive training in areas like ground and space-based ballistic missile early warning and missile tracking systems, ground and ship-based radars and missile interceptors, advanced command and control and battle management systems and procedures, and in-depth practice in using highly sophisticated equipment necessary to communicate with a large number of facilities spread cross nine time zones. Graduates from the basic and advanced course receive initial certification as ballistic missile defense operators, and will also continue extensive training for as long as they are assigned as system operators.

The missile defense system is designed to intercept and destroy a warhead from a long-range ballistic missile aimed at any of our 50 states. For the first time since the invention of intercontinental-range missiles more than 50 years ago, the United States will have a limited missile defense system for homeland defense beginning later this year.



Photo Caption: Captain Steven Sexton (left) and Major Elizabeth Yarbrough completed both the basic and advanced missile defense system operator course with a perfect score of 100%.