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Ocean City Radar Test Completed

The Department of Defense's Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO) completed a series of tests involving an Army PATRIOT radar temporarily set up and operated at the Ocean City, Md., airport last week. The set-up and testing began on August 7 and concluded on August 17. All military test equipment deployed to the Ocean City airport in support of the radar tests has been removed.

The tests used radars at Wallops Island, VA and Ocean City, Md., and a Navy cruiser, USS Cape St. George, located approximately 40 miles off the Maryland coast. In addition, two Lear jets flying in a military target area over the Atlantic acted as "target objects" and a Navy P-3 Orion aircraft flying in the area acted as a relay for information transmitted among the radars. No missiles were present at Ocean City or used during these radar tests.

These radar tests provided technical and procedural data for future Cooperative Engagement Capability (CEC) network tests that will take place on a military test range at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., using the PATRIOT system.

These tests provided repeated successful composite radar tracking data and a clearer radar air picture as planned. The test also consisted of conducting a handful of simulated/virtual engagements and engagement sequences with actual PATRIOT hardware and software. The success of the radar tests result in time and resources savings when the actual flight tests are conducted.

The complete PATRIOT test bed, other than the PATRIOT launcher and missile, was operated with the hardware and software configurations that will be used in future tests. A live CEC network was established with up to five nodes including the Wallops Island radar, the P-3 relay aircraft, two PATRIOT Battery Command Post nodes at the Ocean City airport and the AEGIS cruiser USS Cape St. George.

The August tests produced data for analysis of 'gridlock' (radar alignment), composite tracking and engagement processes. Software problems that were identified during testing were either corrected on site or procedurally addressed. Instrumentation and test hardware lessons learned were identified along with improvements in test procedures. No critical failures were observed.

The Ocean City airport site was selected because of its geometry in relation to the established Wallops Island radar and to be able to take advantage of the AEGIS cruiser returning from its deployment.

"Use of the Ocean City Airport facility to host the PATRIOT radar equipment was critical to achieving success for this test effort, and has contributed directly to our plans to develop and field advanced capabilities to our soldiers, sailors, and airmen deployed around the world in the coming decades," said United States Air Force Colonel Samuel Harris. Harris is BMDO's Director for Battle Management Command, Control, Computers and Communication (BMC4I) Interoperability Acquisition. The CEC network and these radar tests fall within his scope of responsibility.