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PAC-3 Intercept Test - Launch Postponed

The Ballistic Missile Defense Organization and the U.S. Army postponed a planned intercept test of the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missile at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., today. The launch was postponed due to a ballistic missile target software anomaly identified during the Flight Readiness Check. Software corrections were made and provided to the Ft. Wingate target launch site and are being evaluated. The PAC-3 missile remains ready for launch. The Lower Tier Project Office held a full dress rehearsal this morning and will evaluate the next flight opportunity after consultation with the Targets Project Office. The next launch opportunity could come as early as Saturday.

The test involves a simultaneous engagement using a PAC-3 and a PAC-2 missile and two targets. Test objectives included demonstrating system capability to engage and destroy a maneuvering tactical ballistic missile reentry vehicle with a PAC-3 missile and a sub-scale air-breathing target with a PAC-2 missile; and to demonstrate PAC-3 seeker acquisition and tracking of a target with a second object present in the seeker field of view. Targets used in the test are a "Storm" tactical ballistic target and an MQM-107 drone.

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 ballistic missile targets.

The PAC-3 missile has successfully completed seven flight tests prior to today's planned test. 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. The most recent developmental test, 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. 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. The MQM-107 target used in today's planned test is managed by the Army's Targets Management Office (TMO), located at Redstone Arsenal, Ala. The TMO is an element of the Project Manager for Instrumentation, Targets and Threat Simulators, co-located with the U.S. Army Simulation, Training and Instrumentation Command, Orlando, Fla. The Storm target is managed by the Ballistic Missile Target Joint Project Office of the U. S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command.