



News Release

Archive

June 13, 2002

Sea-Based Midcourse Defense Flight Test Successful

The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) and the U.S. Navy announced today a successful flight test in the continuing development of the Sea-Based Midcourse (SMD) element of the Ballistic Missile Defense System capability. Flight Mission-3 (FM-3) involved the firing of a developmental Standard Missile 3 (SM-3) from the Aegis cruiser USS Lake Erie to intercept an Aries ballistic missile target launched from the Pacific Missile Range Facility on the island of Kauai, Hawaii. The target was launched at 9:23 p.m. (EDT). The USS Lake Erie, equipped with Aegis Lightweight Exo-Atmospheric Projectile Intercept (ALI) computer programs and equipment, developed a fire control solution without any external sensor inputs. About six minutes after the Aries was launched, USS Lake Erie's Aegis Weapon System launched an SM-3. Approximately two minutes after the SM-3 launch, the missile's kinetic warhead acquired, tracked, and diverted into the target, demonstrating the SMD ALI system's capability to hit the ballistic missile target in the exo-atmosphere.

The primary objective of this test was to demonstrate the ALI system capability to hit the ballistic missile target. Extensive engineering evaluation data was collected for analyses in preparation for future flight tests. Program officials will evaluate the data and incorporate changes as required.

This was the second consecutive target intercept flight, demonstrating ALI system robustness. Today's test was the fifth in a planned series of nine developmental test flights for the SMD ALI program. An extensive ground test program had already conducted successful testing of elements of the ALI system.

Air defense variants of the Standard Missile are currently at sea in over 50 Aegis cruisers and destroyers, with more than 25 additional ships in the production/planned pipeline.

The Missile Defense Agency and the Navy manage the SMD Program. Raytheon Missile Systems, Tucson, Ariz., is the prime contractor for the development of the SM-3 missile. Lockheed Martin Naval Electronic and Surveillance Systems, Moorestown, N.J. manages the development of the Aegis Weapon System installed in Aegis cruisers and destroyers.