



Archive

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Missile Defense Booster Test Is Successful

The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) announced today the completion last night of another successful flight test involving a new booster rocket designed to support the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system to intercept and destroy long-range ballistic missiles of the type that could be aimed at any of our 50 states. This was a test of the primary booster to be fielded with the GMD system later this year, and included measurement of booster performance and the participation of an integrated architecture designed to detect and track a target missile, launch the interceptor missile, and provide detailed target identification, tracking and communication to the interceptor missile. No intercept took place, as the target missile was simulated for this test.

Integrated Flight Test -13b (IFT-13b) included the second successful launch of an Orbital Sciences boost vehicle with an instrumented payload (simulated exoatmospheric kill vehicle) from the Reagan Test Site, Kwajalein Atoll, Republic of the Marshall Islands, in the central Pacific Ocean.

The booster rocket lifted off last night (Jan. 26) at 9:22 p.m. EST (2:22 p.m. Jan. 27 Kwajalein time), and flew to a simulated intercept point approximately 800 miles downrange and to an altitude of approximately 170 miles above the earth. Initial analysis shows that booster performance was nominal, in that it was within design parameters and that payload separation was successful. Program officials will begin an extensive post-test review to determine precise booster performance parameters.

IFT-13b demonstrated several new system capabilities necessary for the successful operation of the GMD system, including the GMD fire control/communication nodes (GFC/C) located at the Joint National Integration Center (JNIC) in Colorado Springs, Colo. and the Reagan Test Site. The GFC at the Reagan Test Site issued the weapon task plan, which plans and directs the interceptor missile to place it in the path of a target missile to effect a "hit to kill" intercept, using only the force of the direct collision with the missile's warhead to destroy it.

This test also included for the first time participation of military personnel within the Cheyenne Mountain (Colo.) Operations Center and the space-based infrared system test node in Colorado to simulate early warning and tracking information about the simulated target. The In-Flight Interceptor Communications System (IFICS) at the Reagan Test Site was used to relay target information directly to the interceptor. In an actual intercept test, this would transmit integrated tracking and target location information to the exoatmospheric kill vehicle (EKV), which is the interceptor component that actually collides with the target warhead.

Several additional ground and flight tests are planned for this year, including at least two intercept tests. Up to 10 interceptors are planned to be deployed this year at Ft. Greely, Alaska (up to six interceptors) and at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. (up to four interceptors) to provide a defensive capability against a long-range missile attack on the United States. Up to 10 additional interceptors are planned to be fielded at Ft. Greely by the end of 2005.