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USS PAUL HAMILTON (DDG 60) Moves Homeland Missile Defense Closer to Reality

Sailors from the Pearl Harbor-based USS PAUL HAMILTON (DDG 60) brought missile defense closer to reality early Wednesday morning. The ship's Aegis Weapon System and SPY-1 Radar detected and tracked an unarmed U.S. Air Force Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. The ship weapon system detected the friendly missile when it came above the horizon and tracked it for approximately 700 miles. The AEGIS Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) successfully transmitted Minuteman III trajectory data through the Ballistic Missile Defense Communications system to the Ballistic Missile Defense command and control center at the Joint National Integration Center in Colorado and to the Ground Based Midcourse Defense fire control system.

The AEGIS BMD is part of the Ballistic Missile Defense System being developed by the Missile Defense Agency, in cooperation with the U.S. Navy. The U.S. Air Force missile launch was an opportunity to test the ship's ability to provide surveillance and tracking of intercontinental ballistic missiles. When the Ballistic Missile Defense System is initially deployed later this year, the AEGIS weapon system data will provide fire control information to enable launch of a Ground Based Interceptor for homeland defense.

PAUL HAMILTON is one of five Pacific fleet guided missile destroyers that will be outfitted this calendar year with the AEGIS BMD equipment and computer programs as part of the initial deployment of a limited missile defense capability. MDA and the U.S. Navy will ultimately outfit 15 Navy destroyers with this long-range surveillance and track capability. In addition, three Navy cruisers will be outfitted with an ability to engage short and medium range ballistic missiles with the STANDARD Missile -3.

Points of Contact: Chris Taylor, MDA Communications, (703) 697-8001; Vandenberg Public Affairs (805) 606-3595; and Navy Region Hawaii Public Affairs, (808) 473-2877