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## Initial "Pathfinder" Missile Validates Production Assembly Process

Missile Defense Agency Director Air Force Lieutenant General Henry "Trey" Obering III today announced the completion of a "pathfinder" missile at the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) production facility in Troy, Ala. Assembly of this missile was intended to verify manufacturing and assembly processes before assembly of production interceptor missiles begins. Operations for assembling the first of 30 THAAD production missiles began earlier this month.

The operations required to assemble the pathfinder missile verified the design and setup of the assembly system contained in the newly-opened facility and resulted in only minor corrections to the production line. These changes have been incorporated into the production process of the missile to be used for the first flight test of the development phase of the THAAD program later this year. Following completion, the pathfinder missile was shipped to White Sands Missile Range, N.M., and then to the Lockheed Martin facility in Sunnyvale, Calif.

The pathfinder missile will be used to conduct mechanical environment tests that are critical confidence builders in preparation for flight testing. THAAD will be deployed with the U.S. Army starting in 2008. It is designed to intercept and destroy short to intermediate range ballistic missiles at just below or just above earth's atmosphere.

Contact: Chris Taylor, Missile Defense Agency – 703-697-8001