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Missile Defense Agency Successfully Conducts Air-Launched Target Missile Test

Air Force Lt. General Henry "Trey" Obering, Missile Defense Agency director, announced the successful completion today of a test involving the launch of a medium range target missile from an aircraft over the Pacific Ocean, an important exercise designed to evaluate the performance of air-launched targets for use in operationally realistic missile defense flight tests. Air-launched targets will provide the capability to structure target missile trajectories during flight tests so that they are able to better replicate potential trajectories hostile ballistic missiles could use during an attack of our homeland, our deployed forces and our allies and friends.

Air-launched target missiles allow the inclusion of more of the missile defense system during a test, particularly radars and other sensors that are located out of current test ranges, and thus not able to participate in some flight tests.

A medium range target missile was launched at approximately 7:30 a.m. Hawaii Time (1:30 p.m. EDT) from a U.S. Air Force C-17A transport aircraft approximately 800 miles west-northwest of the Pacific Missile Range Facility on Kauai, Hawaii. The target missile was extracted from the rear of the C-17A aircraft by parachute. The missile's rocket motor then ignited, sending it on a planned trajectory over the Pacific Ocean. Initial indications are that the missile's trajectory was within nominal performance parameters. The Ballistic Missile Defense System target tracking and data communication capabilities took part in the exercise, with radars and other sensors successfully tracking the target missile and transmitting tracking data messages to the Command, Control, Battle Management and Communication element located in Colorado Springs, Colo. The medium range target missile has been developed for missile defense testing, and can be launched from air, sea, or land-based platforms.

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