MISSILE DEFENSE AGENCY

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Missile Defense Radar Successfully Tracks Ballistic Missile During Test

The Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) X-band radar successfully tracked a Tactical Ballistic Missile (TBM) during a successful test of a Patriot missile interceptor missile at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., on September 2. The Patriot missile successfully intercepted a ballistic missile and a cruise missile target during the test.

The first production THAAD radar, developed by Raytheon, is located at White Sands Missile Range and was operated by air defense artillery soldiers assigned to Ft. Bliss, Texas during the test. The soldiers successfully acquired, classified and tracked both the target and interceptor during this first mission.

The target missile was flown in a low endo-atmospheric (inside the earth's atmosphere) trajectory as part of the Patriot PAC-3 test program. The THAAD radar utilized production hardware and software to correctly classify the object as a threatening TBM, tracked the object to intercept, and gathered hit assessment data for post mission analysis.

The radar has been tracking satellites since its arrival at the missile range in March 2004, and will play a major role in a series of increasingly complex target missile tracking exercises leading to a planned THAAD intercept of a target missile during a test next year.

The THAAD radar is capable of a wide variety of operations, including target search, missile detection and many other functions at extremely long range. It can also provide communication and in-flight-target-updates to the THAAD missile. It is currently the largest, most powerful mobile radar in the world, and will maintain this distinction until the new Sea-Based X-band radar now under construction is completed next year for use in the Pacific Ocean missile defense test bed.

The THAAD program is managed by the prime contractor Lockheed Martin, and includes the THAAD interceptor missile, mobile launcher, battle manager and radar. The system begins fully integrated developmental flight testing in 2005.

PHOTO CAPTION: THAAD radar operators successfully tracked both target and interceptor during the first Target of Opportunity mission, a Patriot intercept test at White Sands Missile Range, 2 September 2004.

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