



News Release

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Missile Defense Exercise and Flight Test Successfully Completed

Air Force Lieutenant General Henry "Trey" Obering III, Missile Defense Agency (MDA) director, announced today it has successfully completed an important exercise and flight test involving the launch of an improved ground-based interceptor missile designed to protect the United States against a limited long-range ballistic missile attack. The flight test results will help to further improve and refine the performance of numerous Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) elements that will be used to provide a defense against the type of long-range ballistic missile that could be used to attack an American city with a weapon of mass destruction.

The interceptor missile was launched at 10:39 am PDT (1:39 pm EDT) from the Ronald W. Reagan Missile Defense Site, located at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. For this exercise, a threat-representative target missile was launched from the Kodiak Launch Complex, Kodiak, Alaska.

The exercise was designed to evaluate the performance of several elements of the Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS), and mission objectives included demonstrating the ability of the Upgraded Early Warning Radar at Beale Air Force Base, Calif., to acquire, track and report the target warhead, and also to assess the performance of the interceptor missile's rocket motor system and exoatmospheric kill vehicle, which is the component that collides directly with a target warhead in space to perform a "hit to kill" intercept using only the force of the collision to totally destroy the target warhead. Initial indications are that the rocket motor system and kill vehicle performed as designed. Program officials will evaluate system performance based upon telemetry and other data obtained during the test. Although not a primary objective for the data collection flight test, an intercept of the target warhead was achieved.

The test also successfully exercised a wide variety of components and subcomponents as part of the evaluation of system performance, including improved missile silo support equipment, booster/kill vehicle separation, kill vehicle sensor cooling, kill vehicle orientation and positioning and several more.

The Ground-based Midcourse Defense system currently has interceptor missiles deployed at Ft. Greely, Alaska, and at Vandenberg AFB, Calif. Other components of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense include the upgraded Cobra Dane radar in the Aleutian Island chain of Alaska and the upgraded early warning radar at Beale AFB, Calif. A forward deployed air-transportable X-band radar is currently stationed in Japan, and several U.S. Navy Aegis-class cruisers and destroyers with the advanced SPY-1 radar have been modified for integration into the command control, battle management and communication element of the ground-based interceptor system. The new Sea Based X-band radar mounted aboard a large sea-going platform will be integrated into the system later this year, and for this exercise it was used to track the target missile as part of its on-going radar calibration process.

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Video and still photos will be available to the television network pool in Washington, DC. Point of contact is Chris Taylor at (703) 697-8001. Video and still photos will also be available through the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) in Washington. Point of contact is Cheryl Irwin at (703) 697-5331.