Missile Defense Interceptor Completes Successful Developmental Flight Test

PRNewswire

The following is a description of video imagery of today's flight test of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system. Video will be available via satellite downlink at the time and coordinates listed below.

The test took place at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, and involved the successful launch of the THAAD interceptor missile from its mobile launcher. THAAD is designed to intercept and destroy short to intermediate range ballistic missiles high within earth's atmosphere (endoatmospheric) or just above earth's atmosphere (exoatmospheric) in the "terminal" phase of a ballistic missile's flight -- the final minute or so before it strikes its target.

The video footage depicts several different angles of the THAAD launch and flyout, followed by video of the THAAD system elements with descriptive slates.

THAAD is an autonomous, highly-mobile, integrated weapon system consisting of a radar, fire control unit, launchers, and interceptor missiles. When fielded, it will be operated by the U.S. Army worldwide to protect our forces overseas and our allies and friends.

All planned test objectives were achieved today. This was a fully integrated flight test of all THAAD components, including the mobile launcher, radar, fire control and communications element and the interceptor missile. The test did not involve a target missile but utilized "virtual target" software in order to evaluate performance. The test also demonstrated interceptor performance, including the booster rocket system and the divert and attitude control system, which uses small rockets to maneuver THAAD into the path of its target to achieve a "hit-to-kill" intercept, using only the force of a direct collision to destroy the target missile. The THAAD radar participated by injecting the virtual target information into the system, acquiring and tracking the interceptor and providing in-flight target updates.

Soldiers from the 6th Air Defense Artillery Brigade at Fort Bliss, Texas participated in the test, working with system contactors in the operation of the radar, launcher and fire control and communications. This interaction with the complete THAAD system proved a valuable test experience for the soldiers and provided insight into overall system performance and operations.

While the previous successful THAAD flight test conducted November 22, 2005 was focused on interceptor fly-out and controllability, the remainder of the near-term flight test program will provide verification of the integrated THAAD system at increasingly difficult levels, including a target intercept later this year.

THAAD uses technologies developed in earlier MDA programs and during the THAAD Program Development and Risk Reduction Phase. It is the first missile defense technology with both endoatmospheric and exoatmospheric capability. The THAAD element will provide upper-tier (high-altitude) defense in the terminal segment of MDA's integrated Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) designed to provide a layered defense for the U.S. homeland, our deployed forces, allies and friends against ballistic missiles of all ranges, in all phases of flight -- boost, midcourse and terminal. The higher altitude and theater-wide protection offered by THAAD provides more protection of larger areas than lower-tier systems alone.

The THAAD Program is managed by the Missile Defense Agency in Washington, DC, and executed by the THAAD Project Office in Huntsville, AL. Lockheed Martin Corporation is the prime contractor.

Video footage of today's test will be available from 4:00 to 4:15 p.m. EDT from the following satellite coordinates: Satellite SBS 6, transponder 9, Ku analog, horizontal downlink 11921. Trouble number for satellite feed only is (915) 544-8837.

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