

# Missile Defense System Goes Operational as North Korea Goes Ballistic

by Major Laura Kenney

U.S. Northern Command brought the 100th Missile Defense Brigade (Ground-Based Midcourse Defense) to operational level for the first time in response to the July 2006 North Korean missile crisis. Previously maintained in test mode, the brigade, headquartered at Colorado Springs, Colorado, and its 49th Missile Defense Battalion (Ground-Based Missile Defense) at Fort Greely, Alaska, remained at high alert status for the duration of the crisis.

The missile crisis began in June 2006 when North Korea moved short-range ballistic missiles and a long-range Taepodong-2 missile, thought to be capable of reaching the U.S. west coast, to their launch pads. North Korea launched six ballistic missiles on 4 July 2006 and a seventh missile the following morning. It was determined quickly that none posed a threat to the United States or its territories. All landed in the Sea of Japan. North Korea's long-range Taepodong-2 failed in the early stages of its launch.

Members of the brigade and its battalion rose to the heightened mission requirements with great enthusiasm. Although vacations and military schooling had to be canceled, no complaints or grumbling were heard. The mood throughout the crisis was of taut readiness and a willingness to do whatever was required. This was the mission they had been training for years to execute.

"As we saw this play out over a span of weeks, every single Soldier wanted to be on the crew that would respond in defense of the nation. We weren't called upon to do so, but we were ready," said Colonel Michael Yowell, the brigade commander.

"We had excellent situational awareness," said the brigade's intelligence officer, Major Porter Grant. "From the initial preparations to the day the North Koreans fired, our Soldiers knew what they needed to know to perform their mission."

In Alaska, Echo Crew was on duty at the 49th Missile Defense Battalion fire direction center the day of the launches. First Lieutenant Scott Slaughter, an Echo Crew battle analyst, said, "We've always understood how important our mission was; that the primary reason for our existence as a unit is in defense of our nation. That day, if possible, we understood it even more clearly. As a



*Students from the 49th Missile Defense Battalion (Ground-Based Midcourse Defense) man the consoles while attending the eight-week Ground-Based Operator Course. From front to back are Specialist Russell Smith, Staff Sergeant Jason DeLange, and Captain Mark Kiraly.*

student of history, I can say that both we and the North Koreans will learn a lot from what happened. Before and during the incident, I had complete confidence in the system and our training. After the actual launches, we continued scanning the horizon because you can never let your guard down."

Captain Chad Haman, a certified battle analyst, was on duty at Fort Greely as the Fire Direction Center director on 4 July 2006. "The real world intelligence made all the difference in the world," he said. "In the five years I've been with the system, there was never any doubt that we would be ready. After all the building, practicing, and rehearsing, and then the additional buildup to this particular event, we were ready for anything. Afterward, we were able to capture excellent lessons learned," said Captain Haman.

Lieutenant Colonel Ted Hildreth, who took command of the 49th Missile Defense Battalion on 8 May 2006, said that on the big day there were no surprises. "There was an integrated sight picture of the potential threat posed [which was passed] between Cheyenne Mountain, the brigade, and the battalion. Our crews drilled and rehearsed any number of potential threat scenarios to practice and refine provided firing doctrine, to include defined tactics, techniques, and procedures. I was there in the node the day they launched, and our response was exactly the same as we had been trained for. This one just happened to be real."

In Colorado Springs, Major Ron Hoard and his crew reported to duty at the 100th Missile Defense Brigade's Missile Defense Element shortly after the first two short-range missiles had been fired. The Missile Defense Element in Colorado Springs and fire direction center at Fort Greely mirror each other, with the former having a larger command and control role, and the latter taking the lead tactically, although they can act interchangeably.

Major Hoard said the prior launches had everyone in an immediate heightened state of awareness.

"Very shortly after we assumed duty, the Taepodong-2 was launched. It failed almost immediately, and we were informed pretty close to instantaneously of that failure. The crew reacted magnificently—exactly as we'd trained—going into crisis action mode without the slightest hesitation."

Although the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense System was not required to respond to any of the launches, it was available if needed to defend the United States and its allies. Trained and ready missile defense crews were at

their stations on operational systems prepared to respond as necessary. U.S. Army North had the primary responsibility and was prepared to direct missile defense operations to protect the homeland, allies, friends, and other national interests from potentially hostile acts.

The 100th Missile Defense Brigade at Colorado Springs is composed of full-time Colorado Army National Guardsmen and a contingent of active Army Soldiers. The 49th Missile Defense Battalion in Alaska is manned exclusively by active Alaska Army National Guardsmen.



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# Missile Defense More Capable, Relevant

by Sergeant Sara Wood, U.S. Army  
American Forces Press Service

America's missile defense capabilities grow increasingly more important as more countries demonstrate the ability and willingness to develop ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said on 27 August 2006, after touring the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense missile assembly and storage facilities at Fort Greely, Alaska.

"It's an activity that has been evolving over time and is important for the protection of the American people," Secretary Rumsfeld told reporters after being briefed about the interceptor missile activities here. "It is an activity that with each passing month has become more capable."

The Ground-Based Missile Defense system is still limited and needs more testing, but it is important to have when North Korea and Iran are demonstrating their desire and capability to have nuclear programs and terrorist groups are using rockets to attack civilians, Secretary Rumsfeld said. He said he has been involved in the missile defense program from the start and has seen it go through much debate and change before arriving at its current state.

"I've seen the thing calm down to the point where it's now national policy, in law, that the United States develops a capability to defend itself against limited types of threats," he said.



*Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, left, talks with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov after a news conference in Fairbanks, Alaska, 27 August 2006. During his visit to Alaska, Secretary Rumsfeld visited the 100th Missile Defense Battalion at Fort Greely. (DoD photo by Staff Sergeant D. Myles Cullen)*

After touring the missile facilities, Secretary Rumsfeld met with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov in Fairbanks, Alaska. The two discussed the U.S. missile defense system and how it affects Russia, as well as regional and security issues. At a news conference following the meeting, Minister Ivanov noted that the U.S.-Russia relationship is important to global security.

"Irrespective of the issues that we discussed, we always hope that there will be transparency and predictability, as well as the mutual respect of our governments' interests," Minister Ivanov said through a translator.

After the meeting, Secretary Rumsfeld and Minister Ivanov attended a dedication ceremony for a memorial to U.S.-Soviet military cooperation during World War II.

—Department of Defense