

Satellite Debris Analysis Indicates Hydrazine Tank Hit

The Department of Defense announced today that based on debris analysis, officials are confident the missile intercept and destruction of a non-functioning National Reconnaissance Office satellite, achieved the objective of destroying the hydrazine tank and reducing, if not eliminating, the risk to people on Earth from the hazardous chemical.

"By all accounts this was a successful mission. From the debris analysis, we have a high degree of confidence the satellite's fuel tank was destroyed and the hydrazine has been dissipated," said Gen. James E. Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"The successful satellite engagement was truly a collaborative effort from across the U.S. government, the armed forces, industry and academia working together to reduce the risk to human life," said Cartwright.

"The teamwork and interagency accomplishment associated with this operation was tremendous," said Cartwright. "Close workings with the National Security Council, State Department, Defense Department, NASA, Missile Defense Agency, National Reconnaissance Office, and Department of Homeland Security was absolutely key to the effort. The U.S. Navy, particularly the Pacific Fleet, was fundamental to the operation and did a superb job. The expertise of people from the U.S. Strategic Command, Air Force Space Command and Army Strategic Command was invaluable."

A single modified tactical Standard Missile-3 (SM-3), fired from the USS Lake Erie was used to engage the satellite. The remaining two modified missiles will be configured back to their original status as tactical missiles and the operational computer software programs aboard the Aegis ships will be re-installed.

The Joint Functional Component Command for Space Joint Space Operations Center at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., is tracking less than 3,000 pieces of debris, all smaller than a football. The vast majority of debris has already reentered or will shortly reenter the Earth's atmosphere in the coming days and weeks. To date, there have been no reports of debris landing on Earth and it is unlikely any will remain intact to impact the ground.

U.S. Strategic Command space surveillance sensors continue to track and characterize the debris to ensure timely notifications are made, if necessary, with regards to ground or on-orbit debris-related risk.