

MDA Director Advocates Missile Defense Integration at Forum

The emergence of more capable missile threats – more precise and maneuverable ballistic, hypersonic and cruise missiles – requires more capable sensors in space and total integration of all missile defense systems and sensors in space, on land and at sea, the Missile Defense Agency’s (MDA) director said.

That systems integration is particularly important to the national defense network because “we are running out of islands” in the Pacific and “there is a lot of space to cover,” Vice Adm. Jon Hill said Oct. 7 at a Center for Strategic and International Studies forum.

Looking at the Pacific theater, Hill said MDA has been testing integration of the U.S. Army’s land-based THAAD and Patriot missile defense systems. “If you tie in the ships that are off the coast, you can defend against all sorts of threats,” he told the forum.

Hill noted that in the original MDA charter, “we’ve always been focused on the North Korean threat, focused on the growing Iranian threat.

Now we’re moving to these other threats and different adversaries,” he said, an apparent reference to Russia and China.

“What we’re finding as we move into the future, our adversaries are taking a different path” in missile

capabilities, with more precision guidance, hypersonic and cruise missile, he said. "Then you get into the unpredictability of maneuverability. It's very challenging. It challenges your architecture, your fire control, challenges the methods by which you engage."

"I do believe we are at an inflection point, for our forward-deployed forces and our friends and allies.

We have to think differently," Hill said.

Hill showed graphics and explained the latest test of the Ground-Based, Mid-Course system, which is the main national missile defense capability with sensors in space, radars on the west coast and in the Pacific and interceptors in Alaska and California. The March 25 test involved a simulated ballistic missile with decoys. The simulated warhead and a decoy were destroyed by two interceptors, guided by a TPY-2 radar on Wake Island, the sea-based X-band radar and an Aegis-equipped U.S. Navy ship in the Pacific.

The interceptors in that test used the old kill vehicle. Hill said MDA is still working on detailed requirements before issuing a request for proposals to industry for the next-generation kill vehicle, after cancelling the previous attempt at a new interceptor.

He described a recent visit to the Aegis Ashore site in Romania, where construction is completed and is manned by U.S. Sailors and

Romanian personnel but is not yet operational. When completed, it will join the Poland-based Aegis-Ashore site and the four Aegis-equipped Arleigh Burke-class destroyers based in Rota, Spain, as part of the missile defense of NATO allies.

Recently retired Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson advocated getting the Navy out of the dedicated BMD mission, to free the four destroyers for broader missions.

Hill said MDA recently made the final production decision for the new SAM-3 Block IIA missile.

He declined to answer questions about the recent North Korean launch of what may be a submarine-capable missile and the new missile systems displayed in China's 70th anniversary parade, referring those issues to intelligence agencies.