

## First Ground-based Midcourse Defense Brigade in nation activated

By MAJ Laura Kenney

**P**ETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. — A historic moment for the nation's homeland defense strategy took place here Oct. 16, when the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command and the Colorado Army National Guard activated the nation's first Ground-based Midcourse Defense Brigade.

The brigade will operate the first part of the integrated Ballistic Missile Defense System, which, in concert with sister Services, is designed to protect the nation from accidental or intentional limited ballistic missile attacks. It will be manned by Colorado Army National Guard and active component Soldiers.

The brigade will provide expertise to U.S. Northern Command's command and control operations from the Cheyenne Mountain Operations Center.

Another component of the brigade, the Alaska Army National Guard Missile Defense Space Battalion, will be activated in December. It will provide operational control over ground-based interceptors located in Alaska.

LTG Joseph M. Cosumano Jr., commanding general of U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, and Air Force Maj. Gen. Mason C. Whitney, Adjutant General of the Colorado National Guard, hosted the ceremony.

Welcoming the new brigade, Cosumano addressed the crowd of state and local politicians, military service members and their families.

"The missile defense strategy of the 20th century was largely based on the concept that rational countries won't attack each other. We've learned in the 21st century that those theories don't apply anymore. Hostile states, and even non-state hostile groups, now either have or are working on long-range missiles. This activation today of an important part of our homeland defense strategy allows us to defend against that threat," said Cosumano.

"The technology and the organizations have changed dramatically to meet the current threat. The technology has changed from nuclear kill to hit-to-kill. In two wars now, Patriot has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that we can hit a missile with a missile, despite naysayers of past years. Now we can do it in space.

"As to organizational change — where we're having this ceremony, in front of the U.S. Northern Command building, and close to both the Army and Air Force space buildings, is indicative of the joint nature of this

effort to protect our great nation. We'll be depending on Navy Aegis missile cruisers, and on the early warning architecture of the Air Force, as well as the superb skills and training of our own Soldiers.

"And within the GMD Brigade itself, we see the melding of active component service men and women with Colorado National Guardsmen. The Guard is a perfect fit for this mission, with the genesis of their role in national defense dating back to the 1700s. That makes them a natural for this mission, just as Colorado, the hub and nerve center of Space for the nation, is the most logical site for command and control."

Whitney spoke next, expounding on the mission of the Guard.

"We are tremendously proud to be part of this mission. It continues in direct descent the role of the Guardsman in protecting our nation. The only difference between the mission of 200 plus years ago and now is that, with our current technology, we can defend more rapidly and accurately. Even being in Space isn't new; we've been in Space more than ten years now. In all three buildings behind me, you'll find both Air Force and Army National Guardsmen. I congratulate all the members of the new Ground-based Midcourse Defense Brigade, and wish them well as they begin a new tradition of excellence."

GMD is designed to attack and kill any incoming missile in the "middle" phase or "midcourse" of its trajectory, after the boost or launch, and before it reaches re-entry to impact, therefore destroying that missile in Space. Working in concert with the early warning architecture, provided in part by the Air Force and the Navy's Aegis missile cruisers, GMD will launch a booster missile toward a target's predicted location releasing a "kill vehicle" on the path of an incoming target. The kill vehicle uses data from the ground-based radars and its own on-board sensor to collide with the target.

While the GMD Brigade is assigned to SMDC, its operators execute the decision/directive from Northern Command to destroy a ballistic missile threat. The brigade also has responsibilities to both NORTHCOM and U.S. Strategic Command. Command relationships are still being worked out at the four-star level due to the possible trans-regional nature of the threat.

Approximately 90 personnel will be located at the Headquarters. Operators are Air Defense qualified Soldiers and are supported by a Brigade staff (person-



Left, Air Force Maj. Gen. Mason C. Whitney, left, adjutant general of the Colorado National Guard, unfurls the flag of the newly activated Colorado National Guard Missile Defense Brigade, at a ceremony activating the nation's first Ground-based Midcourse Defense Brigade. The "stand-up" took place at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.

Below, COL Gary Baumann, center left, commander of the newly activated Ground-based Midcourse Defense Brigade, accepts the brigade's flag from LTG Joseph M. Cosumano Jr., commanding general, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, at a ceremony 'standing up' the nation's first such unit. Framing the two are, left to right, GMD Brigade CSM Daniel Marques and Air Force Maj. Gen. Mason C. Whitney, adjutant general of the Colorado National Guard. The brigade will be manned by both National Guard and active component Soldiers. *Photos by Dennis Plummer*



nel, intelligence, operations, supply and communications.)

The 110 Soldiers who will be located at the battalion include air defense operators, force protection guard force and staff personnel. Actual interceptors will be located at Fort Greely, Alaska. The battalion will have not only the operational mission, but the testbed mission as well, to ensure continuation of development.

Alaska was chosen as a site for interceptors due to requirements of the system. Geometry and the arc of any missile in flight over the globe make Alaska a perfect choice. There will also be interceptors located at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

COL Gary Baumann, commander of the newly activated brigade, spoke with conviction about his unit and its mission.

"In the 1970's, we briefly had the capability to defend ourselves against the threat of ballistic missiles. At that point, intelligence indicated that nine countries possessed such capabilities. Today, that number has increased threefold. This

unit's activation is a small step towards ensuring the safety of our nation. In December 2002, the President of the United States directed that we push the fielding of this system up from 2006, to 2004. I believe we are on target to meet those goals. Our Soldiers, chosen from the best across the state and nation, are well-trained, excited, and looking forward to the challenge, and have been working tirelessly to be prepared for it."