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Skunk Works Mailing List

RE: skunk-works-digest V8 #66 (THAAD Test)

From: betnal@ns.net
 Subject: RE: skunk-works-digest V8 #66 (THAAD Test)
 Date: Mon, 21 Jun 99 04:22:51 GMT

On 6/19/99 4:17PM, in message <3.0.1.32.19990619161730.0074e82c@e-z.net>, patrick <patrick@e-z.net> wrote:

>
 > If they wanted to keep the missile within a box (the airspace over WSMR)
 > and they knew the fuel to be superfluous why not load it with a "test" load
 > rather than the full amount and the TEMS system to burn it off after
 > ignition?
 >

Because then the missile would not perform as a "regular" missile would. It would be non-representative in performance. It would be like using the performance of the 1970s Streak Eagle as a basis for planning regular F-15 tactics.

> But the greater question comes to mind and that is they obviously rigged
 > this test for a higher probability of kill. Something either not
 > mentioned, glossed over or not asked by the media. Are they not launching
 > the target missile to follow a predetermined path with known reentry points
 > (as it was designed to do) and are they not launching the kill missile with

> a special device to limit its range? This implies the test was designed
> for an impact at a much lower range or distance than called for in the
> THAAD specifications. So how staged was this politically crucial test?
>
> Now this may not be a bad thing if the real test was the final moment of
> lock on and effectiveness of the ballistic hit on the incoming warhead. A
> valid test indeed. But this will still require Lockheed to validate the
> system in a true no holds barred future test where range restrictions don't
> modify flight profiles. (Both the HERA target missile and THAAD are
> launched from WSMR and intercepted over WSMR. This is no where near full
> scale.)
>

Having the target coming in on a known course is not an invalid measure. For BMD to work, it is assumed that there is a good track on the incoming prior to interceptor launch. To stage a full-blown, no holds barred test of the system would require doing it out of CONUS. It would be hideously expensive, would require systems that have not yet been finalized and at this stage of the game would be premature. I would agree, though, that such a test should be conducted before full-scale production would be authorized.

Art

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Created: Mon Jun 21 00:33:10 EDT 1999