

Missile Deactivation Begins At Malmstrom

By Valerie Mullett, 341st Space Wing Public Affairs Office / Published July 13, 2007



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Missile maintenance vehicles are in position at a launch facility near Brady, Mont., July 12 as maintainers remove the Minuteman III missile, marking the start of Defense Department-directed deactivation activities in the 564th Missile Squadron at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont. (U.S. Air Force photo/Valerie Mullett)



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The downstage of the Minuteman III missile located at this launch facility near Brady, Mont. is lifted into the transporter-erector July 12. This mission completed the first missile removal and marked the start of Defense Department-directed deactivation activities in the 564th Missile Squadron at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mo



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(U.S. Air Force photo/Valerie Mullett)

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Senior Airmen Vasileios Kefalas (left) and Joshua Kelly prepare the downstage of a Minuteman III missile July 12 before it is completely hoisted into the transporter-erector for transport back to Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont. The missile was being removed from a launch facility near Brady, Mont., marking the start of Defense Department-directed deactivation activities in the 564th Missile Squadron at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont. (U.S. Air Force photo/Valerie Mullett)

MALMSTROM AIR FORCE BASE, Mont. (AFP) -- The first Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile was removed from a launch facility near Brady, Mont., July 12 as a result of the order to begin missile deactivation activities here.

The 341st Space Wing received formal direction June 29 from Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley to proceed with missile deactivation activities. Fifty Minuteman III missiles and five missile alert facilities in northcentral Montana, operated by the 564th Missile Squadron here, will be deactivated.

The decision to deactivate 50 missiles was made by the nation's defense leaders and is in accordance with the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, which stated, "to achieve the characteristics of the future joint force and build upon progress to date, the Department of Defense will reduce the number of deployed Minuteman III ballistic missiles from 500 to 450 beginning in FY07."

Malmstrom AFB currently operates, maintains, secures and supports two types of Minuteman III Rapid Execution and Combat Targeting weapons systems: the REACT-A and the REACT-B systems. The 564th MS is the only squadron operating the REACT-B system in the Air Force.

Two teams of missile maintainers and handlers executed the seven-and-a-half-hour mission to remove the first missile from its launcher.

In a statement to the media July 2, Col. Sandy Finan, 341st Space Wing commander, said the deactivation would continue at a rate of about one missile per week to meet the one-year deadline for deactivation.

"Many of the missile components removed during deactivation will return to weapon system's flight test and operations programs, extending the entire intercontinental ballistic missile program's viable service life beyond 2018," Colonel Finan said.