

US military tests ballistic missile interceptor off Hawaii

August 4 2015, by Audrey Mcavoy

The U.S. military said Monday it successfully tested an interceptor that can shoot down ballistic missiles as well as airplanes.

The destroyer USS John Paul Jones tested the technology during a series of [flight tests](#) off the Hawaiian island of Kauai over the past week, the Missile Defense Agency said in a statement.

The tests used a modified version of the SM-6 missile the Navy already uses, said Heather Uberuaga, a spokeswoman for military contractor Raytheon Missile Systems.

The existing version can shoot down airplanes, helicopters and cruise missiles. The newer model tested off Hawaii may also destroy ballistic missiles in their last few seconds of flight.

Raytheon says the updated missile is on course to be operational next year, offering the Navy the flexibility to meet a wide variety of missions.

It would join the Navy's arsenal of missile-destroying interceptors. The Navy already has an interceptor, called SM-3, that ships can use to shoot down ballistic missiles midway through their flight.

The Navy could use the SM-6 to shoot down missiles that weren't intercepted earlier.

The Navy has another interceptor, called SM-2 Block IV, that can also

shoot down missiles in the last phase of flight. But it differs from the SM-6 in that its primary purpose is to defend airspace immediately surrounding ships while the SM-6 is designed to provide air defenses over the horizon.

During the first test event in the series, John Paul Jones sailors on July 28 fired a modified SM-6 to destroy a [ballistic missile](#). On July 31 and Aug. 1, the sailors tested the new interceptor against two different types of cruise missiles.

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