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Begich Applauds DOD Decision to Finish Fort Greely Missile Field

In response to a decision by the Department of Defense, U.S. Sen. Mark Begich commended Secretary of Defense Robert Gates for committing to finish silo construction at Fort Greely's Missile Field 2 over the next two years. This decision follows a strong and continuing push from Begich to make necessary investments in the ground based mid-course missile defense (GMD) system modernization and infrastructure amidst increasing Iranian missile launches.

“News that all the silos at Missile Field 2 will be completed is a welcome decision that will decrease the risk of the ever evolving ballistic missile threats from rouge nations by increasing capacity required to defend the United States,” Begich said. “I hope to continue talks about expanding the capacity and capabilities of Fort Greely's missile defense system with the Department of Defense. With the recent cancellation of the GMD site in Europe, Fort Greely is more vital than ever in our defense against North Korea and Iranian ballistic missiles.”

The decision by Sec. Gates follows numerous hearings where Sen. Begich stressed the importance of Fort Greely to military officials and fellow Senators. This included a May 14 hearing where Gates said that he would keep an open mind to continued development and expansion of America's missile defense systems. Working with his Senate Armed Service colleagues, Begich secured several legislative provisions that strengthened policies on missile defense in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010.

In May of this year Sen. Begich hosted Sec. Gates in Alaska and provided him a guided tour of the missile fields at Fort Greely.

Under the Bush Administration Missile Field #2 was to be constructed for 14 interceptors. However, earlier this year when the President's budget request was delivered to Congress, the Administration did not intend to finish construction or emplace any interceptors in Missile Field #2. At the urging of Sen. Begich and in response to infrastructure issues with Missile Field #1, the Missile Defense Agency decided to pursue emplacement of 7 interceptors in Missile field #2 to replace Missile field #1 in July. With the current decision to finish the other 7 silos in Missile field #2 the total capacity will be 14 as originally planned.

A 14 silo field allows the military to have flexibility with the GBI (ground based interceptor) inventory in the future if necessary to respond to emerging threats. Placement of interceptor missiles in the silos still requires further consideration by the DOD.

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