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Air defense systems deployed around D.C.

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The Pentagon began deploying unarmed air defense systems around Washington on Monday in what it described as an "exercise."

Pentagon officials said the exercise had been planned for several weeks and was not in response to any specific threat.

Dubbed "Clear Skies 2," the exercise involves about 300 people. It is designed to test the "connectivity" of the portable ground-missile systems during round-the-clock air patrols over Washington.

The defenses include Sentinel radar, Avenger air defense systems, and hand-held Stinger missiles set up at various military installations in the area, including the Pentagon.

The Avenger is a portable short-range air defense system mounted on a Humvee vehicle that is capable of firing eight Stinger missiles in rapid succession.

Officials said no live weapons would be used in the exercise, but they would not say whether missiles would be available in the event of an actual attack.

"That's an operation detail which we won't discuss," an official told CNN.

An Avenger missile system observed at the Pentagon did not appear to have any Stinger missiles in its launchers.

The exercise involves units from NORAD, the Air Force, the Navy, the Army, the Customs Service, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Secret Service.

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