



## Reaching Critical Will

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# The Dirty Dozen Bechtel and aerospace profiteering

**1. When it is not building nuclear power plants, Bechtel is heavily involved in constructing Ballistic Missile Defense System command and control centers, and maintaining support structures at these bases.** In Fort Greeley, Alaska, Bechtel has completed construction of the initial phase of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system, which is the heart of the US missile defense system.

The Ground-based system is designed to intercept long-range missiles headed for the continental US. However, it is theoretically dual-use, as it will be capable of shooting down satellites – “a task that is considerably easier than shooting down an intercontinental ballistic missile because satellites travel in regular, predictable orbits.” However, serious technical issues have plagued the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system. In tests, the interceptor rockets have failed to make it out of the launch tube, and the kill vehicles (the component designed to take out the incoming missile) have failed to separate from their rockets.

These failures are not necessarily surprising, given that the same company that built the missile defense control centers also designed the ceiling of Boston’s Big Dig tunnel that collapsed and killed a mother of three in July 2006.

**2. Bechtel also manages the operation of a missile defense test range at Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands, under the charge of the US Army Space and Missile Defense Command.** The work conducted there plays a central role in the development of the next generation of US long-range missiles and nuclear delivery systems. Both ballistic missiles and ballistic missile interceptors are tested here: missiles are launched from the Vandenberg Air Force Base in California 7000 kilometers from the Marshall Islands, while interceptors are launched from the Kwajalein site.

It is worth noting that the Marshall Islands is also where the US conducted 67 nuclear weapon tests between 1946 and 1958, leaving behind a legacy of radioactive poisoning.

**3. Bechtel is also one of three corporations that joined with the University of California in 2006 to manage and operate the Los Alamos National Laboratory,** under a contract worth up to \$79.7 million per year. The Laboratory’s Center for Space Science and Exploration is currently developing nuclear power and propulsion systems for outer space exploration. It also builds small satellites and satellite instruments that are used for space surveillance of threats to the US’ space assets.

*This fact sheet was prepared by Ray Acheson of Reaching Critical Will, a project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, in coordination with the Secure World Foundation.*

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/corporate/dd/ddindex.html>