

national missile defence

When Colin Powell was nominated to be Secretary of State for the United States Bush administration in late 2000, he immediately stated the intention for the administration to reopen implementation of the National Missile Defence (NMD) system. "We will stand strong with our friends and allies against those nations that pursue weapons of mass destruction, that practice terrorism," he said. "We will not be afraid of them. We will not be frightened by them. We will meet them. We will match them. We will contend with them. We will defend our interests from a position of strength."*

But for a country that has by far the strongest nuclear and military capability in the world, what exactly is the threat that NMD is preparing for?

According to George Lewis, associate director of Security Studies at MIT,

"the (NMD) system is intended to protect the USA from limited attacks by intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) armed with nuclear, biological, or chemical warheads. Such attacks, ranging from a few to a few tens of missiles, fall into three categories: a small accidental or unauthorized launch from Russia, a deliberate or unauthorized attack from China, or a deliberate attack from a hostile emerging missile state that might acquire ICBMs. This last threat — focused on Iran, Iraq, and North Korea — has emerged as the primary argument for a near-term NMD deployment.

Although it is now technically feasible to "hit a bullet with a bullet" on the test range, adversaries would be able to take straightforward steps to defeat this system, not only preventing it from achieving the high levels of effectiveness claimed for it, but also precluding any significant security benefits. Worse still, deploying such a system would open a Pandora's box of problems for the United States, unravelling decades of efforts to reduce U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles and to limit proliferation of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles worldwide."**

There has been widespread international criticism of the proposed defence system, with warnings from Russia, China and some US allies that the system could be a catalyst for a new nuclear arms race.

The deployment of NMD will make it much harder, if not impossible, to achieve vital arms control objectives.

In the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty 2000 Review Conference, the US and all nuclear weapon states made an unequivocal commitment to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. This commitment, and treaties such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty are all in jeopardy if the NMD system is to proceed.

National Missile Defence in its current form has failed in two out of three operational tests (conducted under the Clinton administration) and has been critiqued by the US scientific establishment as fundamentally flawed.

Over 354 major NGOs representing millions of people worldwide have publicly stated their objections to the NMD system. NMD has also drawn criticism from a range of other influential groups, including 50 United States Nobel prize winners in physics, religious leaders and high-ranking military personnel.

NMD is a scheme that is unlikely to work against a threat that may never materialize — a threat that is better dealt with in other ways. It will cost billions which are better spent elsewhere, and will make further progress toward the total and unequivocal elimination of nuclear weapons much more difficult, if not impossible.

According to an article by Stephen Young of the Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers,

"The US has shown that it is possible to 'hit a bullet with a bullet' but not that this can be done reliably in a real-world system."

Is it worth 120 billion dollars to deploy a system that is ultimately futile and will be responsible for nothing more than international insecurity?



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References & Information sources:

★ For the latest information on how the proposed NMD system works and critiques against it, please go to: www.crnd.org

* from speech given during the announcement of the nomination of Colin Powell to the position of Secretary of State — AAP — article 18 December 2000

** George Lewis, associate director of Security Studies at MIT, discusses the negative impact of NMD on regional stability and international law.

http://www.findarticles.com/m1181/1999_Winter/58517720/p1/article.jhtml

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NMD: Nationalistic Militaristic Domination?

by Soulafreda Valassis & Felicity Hill

National Missile Defense (NMD) is essentially the sequel to the Strategic Defense Initiative, also known as 'Star Wars'. The proposed missile shield, which would intercept any incoming missiles to the United States, is not only unnecessary and technologically faulty, but has the potential to create an arms race reminiscent of the Cold War.

This proposal contradicts the agreement made by all five nuclear weapon states for the 'total and unequivocal' elimination of their nuclear arsenals, as stated in the final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and violates the spirit and letter of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

HISTORY

The history surrounding National Missile Defense is one that began in 1983 when Ronald Reagan launched The Strategic Defense Initiative in order to create a "perfect shield" over the United States from Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles armed with nuclear warheads. Prohibitive cost and failure of the technology proved to make the initiative unattainable, prompting President Reagan to give up the project after the fall of the Soviet Union. In 1996, an election year, President Clinton revitalized NMD efforts by proposing a six-year contract: three years to research and three years to build the NMD system. On July 22, 1999, President Clinton signed the National Missile Defense Act which commits to deploying NMD "as soon as technologically possible." According to the propaganda, this decision was made in an effort to protect the United States from ballistic missile attacks by so-called "rogue states," although many wonder if huge military corporations had any part in the suggestion to re-launch Star Wars. The final decision to deploy will come at the end of this year, after considering three key criteria: cost, threat, and the views of the international community.

TESTING HISTORY

The first test to intercept a target warhead was made on October 2, 1999, and was considered successful, although, it consisted of only one major component of the eventual system. The test was carried out under the most ideal conditions. In fact, testing took place against an "unrealistically cooperative target". According to an article by William D. Hartung and Michelle Ciarrocca of the World Policy Institute, "The 'kill vehicle' that slammed into the target...only found it by first homing in on a much larger decoy balloon, making the true success of the test difficult to judge." It is idealistic to believe that any sort of missile attack would be similar to the conditions tested against in October, 1999.

The second intercept test took place on January 18th, 2000. Although the test was done under a similar context as the first, it

ultimately failed. The failure resulted from a sensor malfunctioning on the "kill vehicle", highlighting the fact that even in the most ideal context, dangerous mistakes are certain to occur.

The third test was conducted on July 7, 2000, at Vandenberg, California. Once again, the test took place within the same context as the previous one, only to produce yet another failure. The test, which occurred off the Pacific coast, failed to hit its target.

Furthermore, in the only independent scientific analysis of the missiles test data, Dr. Postel (of Massachusetts Institute of Technology) has informed the White House that the tests yield evidence of 'criminal fraud'. It was also claimed that the only successful NMD test was itself unrealistic. According to the July 3rd issue of Time Magazine, "the large balloon-shaped decoy acted not as a decoy but as a beacon, which assisted the kill vehicle in its efforts to locate the mock warhead." The July 7th test used a similar decoy, while the rest of the test was "all but rigged." The Pentagon was aware of the type of rocket launched, the nature of the target, the power of its engine, and the direction which it was both coming and going. In addition, there was also a countdown given prior to the warheads departure. Even the Pentagon's director of operational test and evaluation described the tests as "highly scripted" and "not as challenging" as the conditions that would actually occur in reality. Unfortunately, the Pentagon has declined the invitation by scientists to investigate the issue of fraud, while continuing its testing, giving billion dollar corporations the silent green light.

AFTERMATH OF TESTS: NUCLEAR AND MISSILE 5

The effects of the nuclear tests by the US are much greater than those few minutes used to conduct them. The people of the Marshall Islands have castigated the United States for its deplorable role in polluting their homeland. According to the Pacific Concerns Research Centre, "For fifty years, nuclear testing in the Pacific by the United States, France, and Britain has polluted our island and our ocean. Now these missile tests are desecrating our skies." The United States has already been asked to pay extra compensation for the Marshall Islanders, who have been irradiated by almost 70 US nuclear tests between 1946-1958. Unfortunately, one-third of these Islanders died before receiving their full payment of compensation.

The United States has played an irresponsible role in the aftermath of past nuclear testing, leaving Pacific Islanders to question any future accountability. According to Mrs. Salabula of PCRC, "The testing of the NMD system at the US Army Kwajalein Atoll base can only take place because the US authorities are deaf to our call—we want a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific!"

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CURRENT US AND UN ATTITUDES

In a letter drafted by scientist Dr. Hans Bethe, who heads the group that created the first nuclear bomb, "movements towards deploying the BMD would be premature, wasteful, and dangerous." Members of the G8 have castigated the United States for its role in proliferation. In addition to Russia and China, the UN Secretary General, the European Union, Portugal, Sweden, Germany, France, and a coalition of nations known as the New Agenda Coalition (who effectively have the support of the overwhelming majority of countries in the world), have all expressed grave concern over the NMD.

The United Nations General Assembly clearly states not only its intention for peaceful space exploration, but also the means to attain it. It outlines specific guidelines for all member States to work together to avoid a possible arms race. The General Assembly Disarmament Committee Resolution of 1999, "Calls upon all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the objectives of the peaceful use of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space and to refrain from actions contrary to that objective and to the relevant existing treaties in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international cooperation." The United States, along with Albania, Micronesia and Israel voted against this resolution.

CORPORATIONS

Corporations, specifically Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, and TRW, have the most to gain--about 30 billion dollars a year in Pentagon contracts. Interestingly, 35 billion dollars a year in "black project" budgets is spent weaponizing space without the approval of the American people or Congress! Currently, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and TRW are in the midst of creating several space laser weapons; these jobs, however, were not received without effort. The top four corporations have spent 40 million dollars in lobbying Congress and through campaign contributions. One must question whether NMD is anything more than a means of satisfying the military-industrial sector, which is willing to spend money in order to make it.

WHEN SECURITY BECOMES AN OFFENSIVE ISSUE

Absurdly, NMD is not merely for defensive security, but rather, is one of many steps in the creation of an offensive nuclear regime. According to the General Ashy, Commander-in-Chief of US Space Command, "We'll engage in two missions because they will become increasingly important. We will engage in terrestrial targets someday- ships, airplanes, land targets- from space. We will engage targets in space, from space." He continued to state, "we're going to fight from space and we're going to fight into space. That's why the US has development programs in directed energy and hit to kill mechanisms."

The United States Space Command has been developing the concept of "Full Spectrum Dominance," claiming total

domination of space, both in terms of weaponization and resources. These plans are detailed in a pamphlet called "Vision for 2020", the date by which the United States hopes to have literally seized control of outer space. General Ashy justifies the serious concerns of many countries stating, "it will take our everything between now and 2020 to achieve complete dominance for the US alone- no other nations are invited to be involved." These statements of abhorrent greed are not those of a nation in defense, but rather another manifestation of the warrior of American egoism. It seems ironic that these statements are coming from not only the signatories, but the initiators of the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, which claimed the use of space for "peaceful purposes". Rather than a defensive initiative, the drive to Star Wars is in reality an offensive initiative.

These "new" offensive initiatives emerge out of a long history of US espionage. For decades the United States has been spying on thousands of emails, faxes, and phone calls made all over the world. The US has set up spy bases via satellite stations in Menwith Hill (UK), Pine Gap (Australia), and the Aleutian Islands (US) - each of which looks over 1/3 of the world. Insofar as trust and security is concerned, it seems the United States is suffering from a severe case of paranoia, recreating many of the worries previously left behind in the Post-Cold War era.

KEY TERMS

Ballistic Missiles - a delivery vehicle that can carry various types of warheads (conventional or mass destruction) that follows a ballistic trajectory (gravity), unlike a cruise missile which is guided for the duration of its flight.

Kill Vehicle - the self-guided component of the interceptor which attempts to collide with incoming warheads destroying them on impact.

Interceptor - the missile that attempts to destroy incoming warheads.

Target Warhead - the warhead which the kill vehicle seeks to destroy.

Deployment - putting a weapon system into operational mode.

Counter-measures - steps taken to confuse, overwhelm, or deceive the kill vehicle such as foil balloons and decoys.

Submunition - smaller packets or bomblets of ammunition, many of which can be carried on a single missile, which can be used in biological or chemical warfare.

Boost Phase - the initial period of powered flight when the rockets thrusters are firing.