

## Bush to Deploy 'Modest' Missile Defense in 2004

- [Arms Control Today](#)

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Less than a week after its latest missile defense test failed, the Bush administration announced December 17 that it will deploy a limited missile defense system comprising a small number of ground- and sea-based missile interceptors to be ready for use beginning in 2004. The announcement generated a muted reaction abroad, although some Democratic lawmakers strongly questioned the system's technological readiness and the motives behind the administration's decision.

President George W. Bush issued a written statement describing the initial deployment as "modest" but declared that it would "serve as a starting point for improved and expanded capabilities later." He claimed that missile defenses will "add to our ability to deter those who may contemplate attacking us with missiles."

The initial systems set to be fielded between 2004 and 2005 include up to 20 ground-based interceptors, 20 sea-based interceptors with three ships outfitted for their use, an undisclosed number of Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missiles, and upgraded radar systems to help identify and track targets.

Only the 20 ground-based interceptors, 16 of which are to be deployed in Alaska and four of which will be based in California, are designed to hit long-range ballistic missiles. The sea-based interceptors and PAC-3 missiles are designed only to protect against short- and medium-range ballistic missiles.

Bush contended that the U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in June 2002 "made it possible" for the United States to fully explore, test, and deploy missile defenses. All of the systems being readied for deployment, however, are ones inherited from the Clinton administration, which was bound by the ABM Treaty, and only deployment of the ground-based interceptors would have been prohibited by the accord, which barred Washington and Moscow from fielding nationwide defenses against strategic ballistic missiles.

Testing of each of the three systems is either in the early stages or has produced mixed results. The sea-based system has been tested against targets only three times, but each test was successful. The ground-based system's intercept testing record totals five hits and three misses, including a failure on December 11 (see page 26). The PAC-3 system performed poorly in a series of four operational tests involving multiple missiles last February through May, in which only two of seven PAC-3s successfully destroyed their targets.

Despite the modest number of tests and several failures, Lieutenant General Ronald Kadish, who directs the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency (MDA), expressed confidence December 17 that the systems are based on solid technology. "[W]hat we do know is that our fundamental technology of hit-to-kill, collision of the interceptor with the warheads that completely destroys the warheads, works," Kadish stated. He later added, "I know sometimes our record may not show that, but there is nothing here that we have to invent."

Other top Pentagon officials stressed the same day that the three systems are only initial capabilities and should not be viewed as complete or without limitations. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

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cautioned, "I wouldn't want to overplay it. I wouldn't want to oversell it. I wouldn't want to suggest that it has a depth or breadth or capability...it will take some time to evolve."

Yet, Rumsfeld justified the deployment as being better than nothing and said it reflected the Pentagon's new spiral-development approach to missile defense. He explained spiral development as a method in which "you don't wait 'til something's completely done for 20 years; you begin the process, you put some capability out there, and then you improve that capability in successive blocks."

Over the past year, Democrats have strongly criticized the administration's spiral development, and they kept up their assault following the deployment announcement. Senator Carl Levin (D-MI) said the Bush move "violates common sense by determining to deploy systems before they have been tested and shown to work." Echoing Levin, Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) asserted, "The Administration does not know if the system works, yet there is a rush to deploy it."

Representative Tom Allen (D-ME) said the timing of the deployment in 2004, which is a presidential election year, reflected "all politics and little defense." Another House member, Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), described the deployment as "an expensive myth" and "an inexcusable waste of taxpayers money."

In contrast, Senators Richard Shelby (R-AL) and Ted Stevens (R-AK) described the Bush announcement as "great news," and their GOP colleagues James Inhofe (R-OK) and John Warner (R-VA) said Bush deserved "high praise" for his action.

The Bush administration has spent approximately \$15 billion on missile defense during its first two years in office. Kadish said the deployment plans will require \$1.5 billion over the next two years on top of regular annual requests, which an MDA spokesperson predicted will approximate the amounts previously requested.

### **From Testing to Operational**

Work on the ground-based interceptor system is already underway at Fort Greely, Alaska, where the Bush administration plans to deploy part of the limited defense system. The Bush administration began construction at Fort Greely in 2001, saying that the facilities would be used for missile defense testing, but has now designated it a deployment site. Work on the site's first six interceptor silos began in June 2002, and the Pentagon plans to begin building 10 additional silos before the end of this year.

Despite its role in the administration's limited defense, there are no plans to launch interceptors from Fort Greely in future missile defense tests. Instead, test interceptors will be shot from Kodiak Island, which is in the Gulf of Alaska.

The initial deployment will lack the sensors that the Pentagon originally envisioned to help track the target and discriminate between the target and any decoys that might be accompanying it. An advanced X-band radar, which the Pentagon plans to put on a floating platform, is scheduled to become operational in the fall of 2005, and the Space-Based Infrared System (SBIRS)-low and -high projects, which are complimentary satellite constellations, will not be ready until at least 2007. The first launch of a SBIRS-low satellite is set for 2006, while the initial launch of a SBIRS-high satellite is scheduled for 2003.

Until the X-band radar and SBIRS satellites are working, the interceptors will largely be dependent upon an older satellite system and a less powerful, upgraded early-warning radar named Cobra Dane at the western tip of the Aleutian Islands. Ideally located to deal with ballistic missiles launched from Northeast Asia, Cobra Dane is fixed to face west and would not be able to track missiles launched from the Middle East.

The Bush administration has asked the United Kingdom and Denmark if it can upgrade existing U.S. early-warning radars on their territories so that the United States can better track ballistic missiles launched from the Middle East and North Africa. Both countries are currently considering the U.S.

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request. London may reply by the end of January, while Copenhagen's response will likely take a few months.

### **Mild International Protest**

Russia and China, two of the most vehement opponents of U.S. missile defense plans in past years, reacted coolly to the U.S. announcement.

The Russian Foreign Ministry expressed "regret" December 18 over the move. Moscow warned that the project could result in resources being diverted from countering terrorism, which it called the "real challenges and threats of today."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao cautioned December 19 that a U.S. missile defense system "should not undermine global strategic stability, nor should it undermine international and regional security." Liu hinted, however, that, if China saw missile defense as a possible threat, it would respond. "China has always made its military deployment according to its own needs for defense," Liu stated.

China, which currently possesses about 20 long-range ballistic missiles, might view the deployment of 20 U.S. missile interceptors as designed to nullify its nuclear deterrent. U.S. intelligence analysts reported in the summer of 2000 that China might accelerate and expand its ongoing nuclear force modernization effort to counteract deployment of a U.S. missile defense system.

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