

## **Proposed Missile Defense Sale to India Still in Limbo**

- [Arms Control Today](#)

### [Wade Boese](#)

After more than a year of review, the United States has not yet decided how to respond to an Israeli request to export the jointly developed U.S.-Israeli Arrow theater missile defense system to India.

Although India has not formally asked to purchase the Arrow system, which is designed to protect against short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, New Delhi is exploring acquiring an anti-missile capability and has discussed various systems with Washington. India and Pakistan are both developing and fielding an array of short- and medium-range ballistic missiles.

U.S. officials appeared conflicted over the possible Arrow transfer when it first became public last summer, and no unified position has emerged. The Pentagon and White House seem to view the deal favorably, but an interagency review involving the State Department has lasted longer than a year. There is no set date for when the review is to be completed.

An issue highlighted by U.S. officials is how the sale of the Arrow to a third country would square with U.S. commitments under the voluntary Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which aims to restrict transfers of missiles capable of delivering a 500-kilogram warhead at least 300 kilometers. The Arrow has this capability.

The MTCR does not ban transfers of missiles, but the spirit of the regime is that such sales should occur only rarely. Members are expected to subject such deals to great scrutiny, weighing the proposed export against five criteria, including whether an importing state might use the system to deliver weapons of mass destruction or modify it for roles beyond its original purpose.

A key White House official, however, suggested the MTCR is too rigid. The United States must look at ways to implement the MTCR so that it does not impair U.S. missile defense cooperation with foreign governments, according to Robert Joseph, the senior director for proliferation strategy, counterproliferation, and homeland defense on the National Security Council (NSC). Joseph was speaking March 3 at a missile defense conference in Washington, D.C.

Joseph did not single out India or the Arrow system in his remarks, and the NSC did not return calls seeking clarification. A State Department spokesperson would not comment on Joseph's statement.

J. D. Crouch, assistant secretary of defense for international security policy, said at the same conference that the United States had yet to reach a conclusion about the possible Arrow deal, but he also downplayed fears that the transfer could be destabilizing for South Asia or spur an arms race between India and Pakistan. He suggested Islamabad might not view India's acquisition of missile defenses negatively or as a threat to its security.

But Asad Hayauddin, press attaché for the Pakistani embassy in Washington, said in a March 13 interview that any weapons acquisition that would alter the military status quo in South Asia would be destabilizing to regional security. He added that India's purchase of missile defenses "would certainly add" to Pakistan's strategic concerns and that Islamabad would have to respond in some way, possibly by building up its missile forces, to preserve its deterrent capability.

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Ayesha Siddiqa-Agha, a former director of naval research for Pakistan's navy, echoed Hayauddin in a March 15 interview. She described Pakistan as "quite concerned" about a possible Indian purchase of the Arrow and said it would "undermine Pakistan's deterrence capability." Yet, she contended Pakistan would likely have a measured response, which might include an increase in missiles, although only "to a certain degree and no more." Buying its own defenses would be too expensive for Pakistan, she said.

U.S. lawmakers have largely been silent on the issue, except for Representative Frank Pallone (D-NJ). Founder of the congressional caucus on India and Indian-Americans, Pallone wrote Secretary of State Colin Powell a July 23, 2002, letter urging the secretary to support the sale as a move to "solidify" defense ties between the United States and India. Pallone noted in his letter that he understood Powell objected to the deal while "there is [reported] support within the Pentagon and support from Israel to make this sale a reality."

At a hearing last July at which senators questioned him about the MTCR and the proposed Arrow deal, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Vann Van Diepen warned that the United States should be aware of what type of precedent it might set through its own exports and actions. He suggested the United States might find it harder to oppose arms deals it finds objectionable, such as a Russian export of missile technology to Iran, if Washington approved similar trades to its allies and friends.

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