Should the U.S. build and deploy a midphase National Missile Defense System within the next five years?

This chart summarizes the current policy debate on National Missile Defense (NMD) attempting to show the main reasons for supporting or opposing NMD.

**Start Here**

The U.S. should build a National Missile Defense (NMD) system to guard the U.S. against attack by rogue nations (such as North Korea, Iran, and Iraq) by developing a small number of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) armed with biological, chemical, or nuclear (BCN) weapons.

**Summarizing the Current Debate**

Policy of U.S. to deploy NMD. "It is the policy of the United States to deploy a national missile defense." This law was passed by House by 345-71 and the Senate by 95-2, and was signed by President Clinton in July 1999.

No way to plan and build against countermeasures. "An attack with as few as five missiles could break the defense, as protection of objectives is not currently reliable. It would not be feasible to deploy an array of conventional missiles to protect against a mass attack with large numbers of objectives. A few hundred radar reflecting decoy balloons are a simple budget restraint on any possible solution. It is clearly evident that the nuclear and infrastructural targets of real value are too numerous to be protected." - Tsipis, K., "A Strategic Defense Policy" (The Sciences, Nov./Dec. 1999, 66-82).

**Countermeasures are easy to use and inexpensive.** Countermeasures that will confuse the U.S. will be developed by the Chinese and Russian defense industries.

Japan’s minimal deterrence threatened. China currently has a single warhead and could launch liquid-fueled CSS-4 missiles kept on low alert with three or four warheads. These could be easily destroyed by U.S. missile defenses.

Dangerous India-Pakistan arms race. India builds more nuclear weapons, tests will be required by building more. Then Pakistan will respond by building more. This will produce a very destructive spiral of arms races which will continue until one state can match the other’s arms.

Fear U.S. nuclear blackmail. China has expressed that if the U.S. were to deploy an NMD system, it would be deployed to try to force China to halt its nuclear program.

**Is the midphase National Missile Defense system technically feasible?**

Not feasible. The midphase National Missile Defense system is technically not feasible against the ICBMs that rogue nations can build.

Computer software unreliable. Computer software would be so complex and unreliable that it could not be trusted to direct the defense system properly. - Tsipis, K., "A Strategic Defense Policy" (The Sciences, Nov./Dec. 1999, 66-82).


**Are there better ways to protect the U.S. from biological, chemical, and nuclear (BCN) missile attacks by rogue nations?**

Are intercontinental ballistic missiles the most likely way the U.S. could be threatened by biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons? Too costly for protection offered.


**Will leaders of nuclear rogue states be deterred by the threat of a U.S. nuclear retaliatory strike?**


Rogue states not deterred. Leaders of rogue nations will not be deterred by the threat of a U.S. nuclear retaliatory strike. They are not likely to be deterred by any international agreements.

North Korea may be abandoning nuclear strategy. North Korea’s apparent decision to abandon its nuclear program may be a result of the U.S. NMD threat.

**Sudden death.** "During the Gulf War of 1990 and 1991, Bush did not make a threat of U.S. nuclear attack on Iraq but instead deployed NMD to protect against cruise missile attack. North Korea has streamlined its nuclear weapons but has already developed a nuclear arsenal of approximately 50 nuclear weapons." - Tsipis, K., "A Strategic Defense Policy" (The Sciences, Nov./Dec. 1999, 66-82).

**Can’t assume it would be technically feasible.** It is not possible to assume that NMD is technologically feasible without major technical advances.

U.S. could not accept nuclear casualties. The U.S. would not accept an easy, reliable, and cost-effective nuclear weapon in an intercontinental delivery system.


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