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HOUSE RESOLUTION TELLS THE PRESIDENT: DEFEND ALL AMERICANS FROM MISSILE ATTACK

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In the best tradition of representative government, Representative Don Young (R-AK) recently introduced House Concurrent Resolution No. 278 to express the sense of Congress that any national missile defense system should be capable of protecting Alaskans and Hawaiians, and in fact all Americans. Why would Representative Young feel compelled to take this action? Because the Clinton Administration is proceeding with a plan to develop, and perhaps deploy, a missile defense system that will provide protection only for Americans who live near the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) fields in the northern Midwest. The plan is based on restrictions imposed by the obsolete and legally dead 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty between the United States and the now-defunct Soviet Union, which prohibits the deployment of a missile defense system capable of defending all U.S. territory.

The President's plan is poor policy. It will leave the people of Alaska and Hawaii, as well as citizens of many other states, including California and Florida, vulnerable to ballistic missiles carrying biological, nuclear, or chemical weapons. Because of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction around the world, this threat of attack is much more real today, and no longer emanates from the region of the former Soviet Union alone. Representative Young's "All-American Resolution" reinforces the concerns of Alaskans about their vulnerability—concerns they themselves expressed one year ago in a state resolution that demanded protection for Alaskans.

But Young's resolution also focuses national attention on a senseless Administration policy of intentional vulnerability.

WHY ALASKANS ARE SO CONCERNED

The Alaskan legislature was compelled to issue a resolution because in 1995, the Clinton Administration adopted a national intelligence estimate (NIE) asserting that the United States would not face the threat of missile attack for at least 15 years. To arrive at this conclusion, however, the Administration excluded from consideration an assessment of the threat of missile attack facing Alaska and Hawaii that was issued by the Deputy Secretary of Defense at the time, John Deutch. This assessment estimated that territories in Alaska and Hawaii could be reached by North Korea's Taepo Dong 2 missiles by as early as the end of this decade—considerably sooner than predicted by the NIE.

The intentional omission of Alaska and Hawaii from the Clinton Administration's national threat assessment was highly deceptive. In under-

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estimating the threat and pursuing the most minimal missile defense capability possible, the Administration is showing its willingness to leave most Americans vulnerable to missile attack. State legislators in Alaska were right to respond to the Administration's skewed NIE with a resolution demanding that Alaska be included in all future threat assessments. Representative Young's resolution supporting their concerns also demands that the President treat all Americans equally in his future defense plans. A version of H. Con. Res. 278 was incorporated into the Defense authorization bill, which the House adopted on May 21.

WHY ALL AMERICANS SHOULD BE CONCERNED

The "All-American Resolution" is far more than parochial legislation designed to appease the concerns of Representative Young's constituents in Alaska. It highlights the Clinton Administration's adherence to a hopelessly outdated missile defense policy—one that was created for a different era and a far different security environment. Citizens in every state and Members of Congress would be wrong to assume that the President's plan leaves only Alaska and Hawaii vulnerable to missile attack. Because of the Administration's support for the provisions of the ABM Treaty, its plan will leave most states as vulnerable as Alaska and Hawaii.

The Clinton Administration clearly views the ABM Treaty as the cornerstone of "strategic stability." However, the ABM Treaty relied on the premise that the United States and the Soviet Union were the only two nuclear superpowers, and that leaving each totally open to missile attack from the other would ensure stability. This policy of mutual assured destruction (MAD) could not foresee, however, that 19 years later the Soviet Union would no longer exist, or that 26 years later India would test nuclear devices and Pakistan would feel compelled to follow suit immediately thereafter.

In that vein, Congress should consider the implications of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the existence of 15 new states in its former territory. Article III of the ABM Treaty, as amended by a 1974 protocol, allowed the treaty partners to deploy a single missile defense system at one site, but only to protect the immediate region. Under this provision, the United States designated Grand Forks, North Dakota, which is the site of an ICBM field that has since been mothballed. Bringing this system up to a full state of readiness in accordance with the requirements of the ABM Treaty would provide protection only for the northern Midwest region of the country. Alaska and Hawaii, as well as California, Florida, New York, Texas, and many other states, would still have no protection against possible missile attacks.

Members of Congress who are not fortunate enough to represent districts in the northern Midwest should be concerned that their constituents will not be protected. They would do well to express their own objections to this plan as well. In the absence of such objections, the Administration will continue to pursue a seriously misguided "defense" policy.

CONCLUSION

The Clinton Administration's plan for missile defense, which is based on a purposefully incomplete assessment of the threat of missile attack on American soil, would divide the security and defense of American citizens according to where they live. It would pit Americans against each other and ensure that a Cold War relic—the ABM Treaty—continues to keep some Americans protected from missile attack while others are not. The "All-American Resolution" is an expression of outrage by those who believe the federal government's first responsibility is to "provide for the common defence," no matter where Americans live.

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