



Executive Memorandum

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MISSILE DEFENSE TESTING NEEDED TO MEET NORTH KOREAN THREAT

BAKER SPRING

On July 23, 1999, President Bill Clinton signed the National Missile Defense Act (H.R. 4) into law and established as the policy of the United States the decision to deploy a national missile defense system as soon as technologically possible. H.R. 4 does not include specific steps, however, to implement this historic policy. In order to deploy a missile defense system, the U.S. military must be able to test the systems currently under development against the types of missiles that may be launched against the United States or its allies. Today, the clearest threat of attack emanates from North Korea, which surprised the military community last August by launching a Taepo Dong-1 rocket over Japan. Unfortunately, the Clinton Administration's current policy bars the testing of certain defense systems against target missiles resembling the Taepo Dong-1.

Representative David Vitter (R-LA) recently introduced the Realistic Tests for Realistic Threats National Security Act of 1999 (H.R. 2596) to reverse this policy, which is based on a 1995 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that Third World countries like North Korea would not be able to launch rockets similar to the Taepo Dong-1 for at least another decade. North Korea defied this estimate in just three years. H.R. 2596 specifically would require the Department of Defense to test the Navy's Theater Wide (NTW) system and the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system against target missiles that simulate the Taepo Dong-1 by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2001.

Congress should use the opportunity presented by H.R. 2596 to establish the steps that lead to the deployment of a national missile defense system in the near term.

North Korea's Threat.

Since the Cold War, the communist regime in North Korea has remained hostile to the United States. Its million-man army continues to threaten South Korea and the 37,000 U.S. soldiers stationed there. And North Korea spends money to build up its military force despite widespread starvation across the country. In addition to the test launch last August, reports of North Korea's covert program to acquire nuclear weapons and its recent purchase of missile components from China have heightened concerns on Capitol Hill about North Korea's intentions.

Since the 1980s, North Korea's arsenal has included short-range ballistic missiles that are similar to the 300-kilometer (km) Scud missile. In 1993, Pyongyang tested the Nodong missile, which

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has a maximum range of over 1,000 kilometers. It is estimated to have about 50 such missiles. The expanding range of its missiles became most alarming with the test launch of the Taepo Dong-1 last August to put a satellite in orbit. This launch surprised the U.S. intelligence community because the rocket included a third stage, and although the attempt to deploy the satellite failed, the rocket left debris some 4,000 km from the launch site. If configured as a ballistic missile, the rocket is estimated to have a maximum velocity of 5 to 8 km per second, depending on its warhead. Both these characteristics mean the rocket exceeds the Clinton Administration's arbitrary testing limits on target theater missiles that have a maximum range of 3,500 km and a velocity of 5 km per second.

Realistic Threat Response. In 1995, when the Clinton Administration announced its intelligence estimate that no hostile Third World country would be able to launch a ballistic missile similar to the Taepo Dong-1 within the next 10 years, it affirmed its policy to limit the capability of U.S. missile defense systems to meet this long-range threat. Consequently, its current policy bars the NTW and THAAD systems from being tested against target missiles that resemble the Taepo Dong-1. To begin testing against such missiles, Congress should insist that the Administration remove its restrictions on testing. In addition, Congress should instruct the Department of Defense to establish:

- **A testing program based on a more realistic assessment of the threat.** Both missile defense programs are progressing according to a timetable based on the 1995 NIE assessment. North Korea's test launch last year demonstrated this assessment is flawed. A realistic assessment would enable the military to remove the technological and bureaucratic barriers to testing its current systems against target missiles that resemble the Taepo Dong-1.
- **Precise testing goals.** The NTW and THAAD missile defense programs should proceed with a sense of urgency. Their scientists and engineers should receive specific testing goals based on a realistic assessment of the threat. H.R. 2596, for

example, would set as a clear goal the testing of both systems against target missiles with the specific characteristics of the Taepo Dong-1.

- **A clear deadline for development and testing.** The NTW and THAAD missile defense programs have suffered because of the Clinton Administration's mistaken NIE assessment. They should receive specific deadlines for the development and testing of their missile defense systems. H.R. 2596, for example, would set the end of FY 2001 as the deadline.
- **A streamlined management approach to developing and testing missile defenses.** A streamlined management approach such as that used to develop the Polaris system would enable the military to meet whatever deadline Congress established. Section 2 of H.R. 2596, for example, would direct the Director of the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization to make necessary adjustments in NTW and THAAD program management to be consistent with the legislation's testing deadline. Streamlined management would increase the likelihood that the United States would deploy an adequate missile defense at an earlier date.

When a bipartisan majority of Congress passed H.R. 4 last May, it sent a clear message to the Clinton Administration that Americans in general, and U.S. troops specifically, want and deserve protection against missile attack. President Clinton agreed to this presumption by signing H.R. 4 last week. But to get from that declared policy of providing missile defense for America to deploying an effective defense, the U.S. military must be free to develop and test systems that respond realistically to the emerging threat. Such legislation as H.R. 2596, which has the support of House Armed Services Committee members Duncan Hunter (R-CA) and Curt Weldon (R-PA), demonstrates that Congress understands this need and that its support of missile defense is not just rhetorical.

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