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## CUTTING THE NAVY THEATER-WIDE PROGRAM WILL UNDERCUT MISSILE DEFENSE

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The U.S. Department of Defense is considering a proposal to slash more than \$2.5 billion from the Navy Theater-Wide (NTW) missile defense program. Such a reduction would all but halt its development. The proposal suggests that these funds be transferred to other missile defense programs, particularly the Army's Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) program.

Reducing funding for the NTW system would seriously damage efforts to mount a national missile defense system "as soon as is technologically possible," as the National Missile Defense Act passed by Congress in May 1999 requires. This is especially troublesome in light of the increasing threat of missile attacks from such rogue states as North Korea, which launched a three-stage rocket over Japan in August 1998. With modifications, this rocket could reach parts of the United States or its territories. The NTW system is the only program managed by the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization that would be capable of protecting all Americans and America's allies from such an attack.

Deploying missile defense is among the U.S. government's most important priorities because it will end America's growing vulnerability to ballistic missiles armed with nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. All missile defense programs under development deserve full funding, even if it means increasing the overall defense budget. The Pentagon's proposal ignores this urgency and suggests

that various missile defense programs be pitted against one another for priority and funding. This is not necessary. Neither is it wise.

**The Navy Theater-Wide's Strategic Importance.** The NTW system is best positioned to meet the escalating threat of a missile attack. North Korea's launch of the Taepo Dong-1 missile demonstrates that missiles are proliferating in rogue states, against which the United States has no defense. The NTW system could meet this threat by deploying missile interceptors from the Navy's Aegis cruiser fleet. This sea-based system could be built in less time than the ground-based sites recommended by the Administration at one-tenth the cost of building just one ground-based site. The Navy could deploy 650 interceptors on its cruisers in about three to four years. Additionally, linking the system with information from proposed space-based sensors would create an even more effective global defense system.

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These features and advantages of the Navy's Theater-Wide system are well recognized by the decisionmakers in Washington. For instance:

1. **The Pentagon has reported that the NTW system alone could be upgraded and rapidly deployed to protect Americans and U.S. allies.** The Pentagon determined that the NTW's potential ability to intercept missiles outside the atmosphere and its high mobility are important contributions to missile defense that the other missile defense programs cannot duplicate. It described this unique feature in a public report to Congress last August. The Pentagon's report confirmed the findings of The Heritage Foundation Commission on Missile Defense, which released its report in March 1999.
2. **Congress views the NTW program as an important component of national missile defense.** The Pentagon's proposal to curtail NTW funding and transfer missile defense funds to other programs effectively pits the NTW system against the THAAD system. The proposal implies that only one of these systems will be deployed. But this is not the case. In fact, Congress expressly prohibited this "either/or" approach in the fiscal year 2000 Defense Authorization Bill, which states that the Department of Defense shall establish an acquisition strategy that "provides for accelerating the deployment of both of the upper tier systems to the maximum extent practicable" (Section 232). Thus, any decision to curtail the NTW program will be at odds with Congress's expressed intent and with the law.
3. **The Administration has designated the NTW system as a core missile defense program.** The Clinton Administration recognizes the compelling case for deploying the NTW system. Between 1994 and 1998, nine Pentagon and Navy studies strongly supported NTW's

approach, and several studies strongly recommended that the program be accelerated. A decision to curtail this program would be inconsistent with the Administration's own assessments of the importance of NTW to missile defense.

4. **The Administration views the NTW program as essential in meeting security commitments to U.S. allies, particularly Japan.** The Clinton Administration entered into an agreement with Japan in August to cooperate in the field of missile defense. The purpose of this joint undertaking is to protect the Japanese people and U.S. forces deployed in Japan against the escalating missile threats in the region. At the heart of this agreement is a sea-based defense option that envisions the deployment of the NTW system by the navies of the United States and Japan.

**Conclusion.** Curtailing funding for the NTW missile defense program makes little sense. It would impede progress in deploying an effective system in the near term. Congress and all Americans should be alarmed by this attempt to kill a promising system in its infancy. They understand the serious threat ballistic missiles now pose. So does the President, who, in July 1999, signed the National Missile Defense Act into law. Pitting one authorized missile defense program against the others will only delay and weaken America's capability to defend itself against a ballistic missile attack. All existing programs—ground- and sea-based—complement one another, so all should proceed with full funding. Further, Congress should tell the Administration that it remains committed to the accelerated deployment of the NTW system as a means to end the vulnerability of Americans to ballistic missiles.

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