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## MISSILE DEFENSE PROGRAMS LAG BEHIND THE THREAT

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Congress is seeking to deploy ballistic missile defenses as soon as development of the technology permits. The sense of urgency is clear: The expansion of the missile threat has outpaced the development and deployment of missile defense systems.

Even under the most compressed timetables for the deployment of the missile defense systems now under development, the United States will continue to face a window of vulnerability. As the July 1998 report of the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States (the Rumsfeld Commission) and the September 1999 assessment of the intelligence community both point out, more than 20 Third World countries today have ballistic missile programs in progress and are focusing their efforts on how to obtain more sophisticated and longer-range delivery systems. Further, the United States likely will have little warning before these new missiles are deployed.

This dangerous state of affairs has been exacerbated by the Clinton Administration's neglect of missile defense. As the threat has grown, U.S. defenses have been weakened. Defense capabilities lag behind the threat for one reason: President Bill Clinton has dismantled the robust missile defense program he inherited from the Bush Administration. For example, the Clinton Administration:

- **Terminated** the Bush Administration's missile defense deployment plan, called Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS);
- **Cut** funding for missile defense development programs in half;
- **Terminated** the "Brilliant Pebbles" space-based interceptor development program; and
- **Walked out** of talks with Russia regarding cooperation on efforts to meet the missile threat to both countries, essentially snubbing President Boris Yeltsin's Global Protection System (GPS) proposal for such cooperation on missile defense.

If the missile defense program begun under President George Bush had been left in place, the United States already would have fielded at least limited defenses against ballistic missiles and maintained a strong position for addressing more advanced threats. Now America must play catch-up against the rapidly escalating threat.

**A Policy of Unilateral Restraint.** The Clinton Administration, despite the immediacy of the threat, favors a "business as usual" approach to the

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development and deployment of missile defenses for America. President Clinton, for example, has deferred a decision regarding the deployment of a system for protecting U.S. territory until the summer of 2000 at the earliest. His Administration has imposed a variety of restrictions on technologies that may be used in the development and deployment of missile defense systems. It also bars the military's consideration of a sea-based defense system to counter long-range missiles. This sea-based option not only could be deployed more rapidly and for less cost than any other system, but also is the most effective one available.

The American people need to understand how the Administration's policies have increased their vulnerability to missile attack by allowing America's defenses to lag behind the threat. Specifically:

- **The Clinton Administration's tentative plans to deploy a missile defense system would leave the United States vulnerable to missiles from rogue states for at least several years.** The Administration's plans call for the deployment of a system to protect U.S. territory against attacks from rogue states no sooner than 2005. Unfortunately, this plan would leave the United States vulnerable to blackmail by North Korea for at least the next five years, since Pyongyang could test a long-range missile, the Taepo Dong-2, that is capable of reaching U.S. territory.
- **The Clinton Administration bars the testing of defense systems against the type of intermediate-range missiles being developed by North Korea.** On August 31, 1998, North Korea launched a Taepo Dong-1 rocket over Japan. This rocket flies between 5 and 8 kilometers per second, yet the Administration imposes a 5-kilometers-per-second cap on target missiles in its tests of the Navy Theater-Wide (NTW) defense system and the Army's Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system. These programs represent the Pentagon's premier systems for countering intermediate-range

missiles. Without the ability to test against known missile capabilities like that of the Taepo Dong-1, however, U.S. allies and U.S. military forces in the Western Pacific will continue to be defenseless against such missiles.

- **The Clinton Administration's policy bars both the testing and deployment of defenses against the long-range missiles being developed by China.** China is developing a new generation of missiles capable of carrying dummy warheads to fool ground-based missile defense systems. This fact was confirmed by the May 1999 report of the House Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China, chaired by Representative Christopher Cox (R-CA). The best defense against these kinds of missiles is to intercept them in their ascent phase before they release the dummy warheads. Ascent-phase defense systems can be deployed on ships or in space, but the Clinton Administration continues to obstruct these programs.

**Conclusion.** The United States should never be put in a position that requires it to undertake a crash program to develop the means to counter a clear and present threat to national security, such as that posed by ballistic missiles in the hands of rogue states. It certainly cannot afford to restrain progress in its missile defense programs.

To make up for lost time, the Administration must commit to the deployment of a missile defense system, lift the restrictions on the testing of missile defense technologies, adopt a streamlined management system, remove the obstacles to deployment that result from outdated arms control considerations, and provide adequate funding for missile defense programs.

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