



Executive Memorandum

No. 861

February 21, 2003

CONGRESS SHOULD COMMEND BRITAIN ON MISSILE DEFENSE RADAR UPGRADE

BAKER SPRING

On February 5, President George W. Bush's vision for a global missile defense architecture took a major step forward. On that day, British Secretary of State for Defence Geoff Hoon announced in a written statement to the House of Commons that the British government had accepted the U.S. request to upgrade the early warning radar located at the Royal Air Force base at Fylingdales, in North Yorkshire, for use in ballistic missile defense. Congress should commend the British government for taking this courageous step through statements by individual Members and the adoption of a sense-of-Congress resolution.

The Bush Administration made this request to the British because it wishes to deploy a missile defense architecture capable of defending both the territory of the U.S. and its allies against limited ballistic missile strikes. Upgrading the radar facility located at Fylingdales will give it the ability to track ballistic missiles launched, for example, from the Middle East in the direction of the U.S. and its European allies, including the United Kingdom. This tracking information will help missile defense interceptors to destroy threatening ballistic missiles. The British decision to allow the upgrade represents the first time a U.S. ally has permitted deployment of a missile defense system component on its territory to assist the U.S. in defending U.S. territory, as well as the territories of the allies, against ballistic missile attack. While the British have taken this

step in order to defend themselves, they are also assisting in the defense of the U.S.

The impact of commending the British would extend beyond bilateral U.S.–British cooperation on missile defense. Other countries may be poised to follow Britain's lead and should be encouraged to do so. For example, Denmark—which is responsible for Greenland's foreign affairs—may approve a similar upgrade of the radar facility in Thule, Greenland. Israel is likely to continue cooperation with the U.S. on the joint Arrow missile defense program. Canada may agree to work with the U.S. to maximize the utility of the joint North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) in providing missile defense to North America. Australia may follow through on its previously expressed commitment to allow use of facilities on its territory to support missile defense operations. Japan may agree to a follow-on accord to the memorandum of understanding signed in

Produced by the
Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis
Institute for International Studies

Published by
The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Ave., NE
Washington, D.C.
20002-4999
(202) 546-4400
<http://www.heritage.org>



This paper, in its entirety, can be
found at: [www.heritage.org/
research/missiledefense/em861.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/missiledefense/em861.cfm)

1999, allowing for cooperation in the development of the Sea-Based Midcourse Defense system. Russia, which inherited an array of missile defense technologies from the former Soviet Union, may agree to share some of its technology.

The Fylingdales Radar: Today and Tomorrow. Today, the Fylingdales radar is an early warning radar. It was built and upgraded during the Cold War to detect Soviet ballistic missile launches to provide U.S. and British strategic forces with advance warning of an attack. The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty between the U.S. and the Soviet Union prohibited the U.S. from cooperating with the U.K. on deploying a radar system capable of countering strategic ballistic missiles or their elements in flight trajectory. Specifically, Article IX of the treaty prohibited the U.S. from transferring ABM systems or components, including ABM radar, to other states, such as the U.K., or deploying them outside its territory. Before President Bush's decision to withdraw the U.S. from the ABM Treaty, the Bush Administration could not request that the radar facility be upgraded for use as an ABM radar.

The upgrade of the Fylingdales radar will include both hardware and software modifications to the existing radar, paid for by the U.S. The modified system will use the existing Ultra High Frequency (UHF) output and not increase its power. The modifications will allow the radar to generate the initial targeting information necessary to direct a mid-course missile defense interceptor to the general area of the intercept. While the interceptor accelerates toward the intercept area, a second radar array will develop more precise targeting data and guide the interceptor closer to the trajectory of the incoming missile. As the interceptor approaches the incoming missile, the interceptor's on-board sensors will guide it the rest of the way until it intercepts and destroys the ballistic missile.

How Congress Can Send a Positive Message on Missile Defense. Given the importance of mis-

sile defense to U.S. security, Congress should not fail to acknowledge the contributions of friends and allies toward fielding this system. It can express its appreciation in two ways.

- Individual Members of Congress can make speeches commending specific allies each time an ally makes a significant contribution. Specifically, individual Members of Congress should express their appreciation to the government of the United Kingdom now. They should also make similar speeches regarding other countries in the future.
- Congress as a whole can adopt sense-of-Congress resolutions formally commending the allies for their cooperation on missile defense. Congress could thank each ally individually with separate resolutions or thank the allies as a group with one resolution, if other countries quickly follow the U.K.'s lead.

Conclusion. In recent months, the United States has criticized certain actions taken by its allies. In some cases, such as Germany and France, the allies have deserved these criticisms. The U.K., by contrast, has been a dependable ally, both in addressing the threat posed by Iraq and now in the area of missile defense.

Congress cannot afford to focus only on the negative. When the allies do the right thing, Congress should promptly express its appreciation in sincere and heartfelt terms. Nowhere can such positive reinforcement be of more value to the United States and its vital interests than in the area of missile defense: At stake is nothing less than the very safety and well-being of the American people. Thanking the United Kingdom would be a good start.

—*Baker Spring is F. M. Kirby Research Fellow in National Security Policy in the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies at The Heritage Foundation.*