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**SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 AND NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE:  
UPPING THE ANTE TO PROTECT AMERICA AGAINST  
THE ROGUE MISSILE THREAT**

**BY**

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**September 11, 2001 and National Missile Defense:  
Upping the Ante to Protect America Against the Rogue Missile Threat**

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## ABSTRACT

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Whether or not America needs a National Missile Defense (NMD) system in light of events of September 11, 2001 (9/11) seems, in its simplest sense and on the one hand, to be a foregone conclusion. But on a more intellectual level, is this really the case? Can the events of perhaps the most tragic day in contemporary American history be responsible for altering the long debate over National Missile Defense to the point where deployment of a National Missile Defense system is imminent?

The short answer is yes. The United States of America must deploy a National Missile Defense system now, in light of events of 9/11, if it is to "provide for the common defense" as charged by the Constitution. This paper analyzes the necessity for deploying a National Missile Defense system in light of events surrounding 9/11 using a construct organized around four specific criteria:

- the changed nature of the ballistic missile threat
- movement in United States thinking concerning the effectiveness of deterrence for protecting the country against missile threats
- corresponding changes in American national security strategy goals and objectives and,
- a serious reconsideration of the 1972 Antiballistic Missile (ABM) treaty

Using the criteria described, a framework for comparing the debate, both before and after 9/11, is established in an effort to ascertain shifts in the national and international discourse on a decision by the Government of the United States of America to field an operational National Missile Defense system. The conclusion is that the events of 9/11 have provided the Government of the United States reasonable and prudent justification to proceed with fielding an operational National Missile Defense system as soon as possible.



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## SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 AND NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE: UPPING THE ANTE TO PROTECT AMERICA AGAINST THE ROGUE MISSILE THREAT

...If an ICBM were launched at the United States today – by accident or design – there is not a single thing the United States military could do to stop the warhead or multiple warheads from reaching their targets and killing hundreds of thousands, possibly millions of Americans...

—The Heritage Foundation

This paper poses the question whether deploying a National Missile Defense system is needed in light of events surrounding September 11, 2001 (9/11). To answer that question one must first examine whether the need to deploy a National Missile Defense system was relevant before 9/11.

Indeed, historical evidence seems to indicate that several developments have converged to garner the support of the majority in Congress and to overcome an opposition by the last Presidential administration to fielding a National Missile Defense system. This paper analyzes the necessity for deploying a National Missile Defense system in light of events surrounding 9/11 using a construct organized around four specific criteria:

- the changed nature of the ballistic missile threat
- movement in United States thinking concerning the effectiveness of deterrence for protecting the country against missile threats
- corresponding changes in American national security strategy goals and objectives and,
- a serious reconsideration of the 1972 Antiballistic Missile (ABM) treaty

These factors, taken collectively prior to 9/11, produced a working consensus favoring National Missile Defense deployment where alone, none would have sufficed, as was the case previously and prior to the late 1990s. Since 9/11, the United States Government has taken significant steps forward to its decision to deploy a NMD system. Whether or not America needs a National Missile Defense (NMD) system in light of events of 9/11 seems, in its simplest sense and on the one hand, to be a foregone conclusion. But on a more intellectual level, is this really the case? Can the events of perhaps the most tragic day in contemporary American history be viewed as having such a dramatic effect on American domestic and international politics that the debate on National Missile Defense is fundamentally changed?

The short answer is yes. The United States of America must deploy a National Missile Defense system now, in light of events of 9/11, if it is to “provide for the common defense” as charged by the Constitution. September 11, 2001 will indeed be a day of infamy for citizens of this generation and the citizens of the next generation. And while history textbooks of the future



will be replete with the acts of terrorism that day, will they also reveal that in 2001 the United States of America decided, for the first time in nearly four decades of courting the National Missile Defense "issue," to deploy a National Missile Defense system in response to these threats?

The paper seeks to determine whether or not a National Missile Defense system is relevant following the attacks on America on 9/11. Using the criteria described, a framework for comparing the debate, both before and after 9/11, is established in an effort to ascertain shifts in the national and international discourse on a decision by the Government of the United States of America to field an operational National Missile Defense system. The conclusion is that the events of 9/11 have provided the Government of the United States reasonable and prudent justification to proceed with fielding an operational National Missile Defense system as soon as possible.

In comparing relative need for deploying a National Missile defense system before and after 9/11, this paper examines select areas within the NMD debate where changes in the discourse measured against the stated cluster of criteria are pronounced and responsible for dramatic positive shifts in the debate to deploy a National Missile Defense system.

Prior to events surrounding 9/11 the conditions necessary for a decision to deploy a National Missile Defense system were, for the first time in many years, seemingly very favorable – positive support from the Congress, funding, technology, and public support of the people. After 9/11, a powerful and unforeseen change agent emerged for proponents of National Missile Defense; the introduction of risk. For before 9/11, the issue of risk as it relates to Americans being attacked within its borders seemed as remote as Oscar Madison and Felix Unger agreeing upon the cleanliness of their New York apartment. The discussion was oxymoronic prior to 9/11.

But today, sadly, Americans are at greater risk from further attack within our borders. Attacks of any form, but in particular, asymmetric forms of delivering weapons of mass destruction (WMD) seemingly are the next shot waiting to be heard 'round the world.

One line of defense – a National Missile Defense system – offers a means to mitigate a portion of that risk. Used collectively with other means – offensive WMD warfare and rallying allies who share similar views on deterrence and proliferation, to name but two, can complement the effects of a National Missile Defense system and offer Americans a reasonable, albeit limited, protection against such threats.

## THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT

### Pre-9/11

Just where exactly were we with National Missile Defense on September 10, 2001? What factors can be isolated that have led to the purported turnabout in the prospects for National Missile Defense? First, the ballistic missile threat against which NMD is expected to play has changed dramatically and is not remotely comparable to that of the former Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is no more and the possibility of a deliberate missile attack from Russia generally is considered to be very low. The new sources of concern are "rogue states" such as North Korea, Iraq, and Iran – President Bush's so-called "axis of evil" - which are openly hostile to the United States and intent on acquiring long-range missiles to deliver weapons of mass destruction (WMD).<sup>1</sup>

Three years ago, the United States Commission on National Security / 21<sup>st</sup> Century's initial report, "The Emerging Global Security Environment for the First Quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," said that the nation had to "rethink its concept of defense and learn to protect itself from new and different threats."<sup>2</sup> Chaired by former senators Gary Hart and Warren Rudman, the Commission said in its first report, "what will change will be the kinds of actors and the weapons available to them."<sup>3</sup> Very prophetically, the Commission predicted that some societies will seek to maximize violence and damage. It also predicted that these adversaries will develop "techniques of denial and deception in an attempt to thwart U.S. intelligence efforts – despite U.S. technological superiority."<sup>4</sup>

"Rogue states" prospective arsenals of long-range missiles, however, are likely to remain relatively modest for decades, so U.S. NMD programs need only to neutralize missiles numbering in the dozens as opposed to the thousands during the heyday of the Soviet Union. This reduction in threat has gone far to ease concerns over cost and technical feasibility. Even organizations that in the past argued vociferously against NMD have acknowledged that defending against a limited rogue missile threat is practicable.<sup>5</sup>

Likewise, where cost estimates for a National Missile Defense system addressing the Soviet missile threat ranged in the hundreds of billions, systems designed to counter the rogue missile threat run at most to the few tens of billions as projected by the Congressional Budget Office.<sup>6</sup> Finally, several recent successful interceptor tests have provided some empirical evidence that defense against a small missile threat is well within America's technical and financial reach.

Even the controversy surrounding the pace of the emerging rogue missile threat to the United States has contributed to the consensus in favor of National Missile Defense. At first, National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 95-19 appeared to place a serious obstacle in NMD's path. Put succinctly, the 1995 report stated "there would be no new missile threats to the Continental United States for at least 15 years."<sup>7</sup> Curiously, this estimate ignored the two states Alaska and Hawaii, closest to North Korea, but its conclusions nonetheless dampened any sense of urgency for National Missile Defense deployment.

However, the Congressional response to this intelligence estimate was to establish a bipartisan commission to examine the emerging missile threat to the United States. The Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States was formed and charged with the responsibility to "assess the nature and magnitude of the existing and developing ballistic missile threat to the United States."<sup>8</sup> Chaired by Donald Rumsfeld, the commission issued its public report in July 1998. This "Rumsfeld Report" was a dramatic rebuke to the intelligence community's earlier benign forecast. It identified several potential near-term rogue missile threats and pointed to serious methodological problems with the previous forecasts. And as if on cue, on August 31, 1998, the North Koreans tested a three-stage missile reportedly with enough potential range to target portions of the United States.<sup>9</sup>

The intelligence community quickly revised its earlier "fifteen-year rule," and indeed, most recently the National Intelligence Council released an unclassified report forecasting that North Korea would indeed pose a near-term threat to the United States, and that within fifteen years Iran probably, and Iraq possibly, would also pose missile threats.<sup>10</sup>

### **Post-9/11**

The potential for coercion is perhaps the ballistic missile's greatest value to the leader of "rogue states" today. Beyond the capability to threaten distant cities and drain an opponents military resources, the ballistic missile, if sufficiently accurate and lethal, can threaten military forces and spur inaction. By targeting vulnerable transportation sites such as ports and airfields, an adversary could block U.S. entry into a conflict zone and cut off logistics to support military operations, especially if he employed chemical or biological contaminants.

So critical is this thought that the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) devotes a significant portion to addressing the threat posed to U.S. military forces by area denial tactics, techniques, and procedures. The QDR, although not a strategy document per se, points to the assumption that enemies post-9-/11 "could have the means to render ineffective much of our current ability to project military power overseas."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, "saturation attacks with

ballistic and cruise missiles could deny or delay U.S. military access to overseas bases, ports, and airfields."<sup>12</sup>

Particularly troubling, is that the shape of future missile threats would not be confined to the production and deployment of long-range missiles, instead it could be defined by attempts to use shorter-range delivery systems from unconventional platforms. For example, such rogue states as Iran and North Korea "are working to acquire submarines and may even launch the shorter-range missiles they now possess from ordinary merchant ships off U.S. shores."<sup>13</sup> The threat, it seems, is evolving to a lower plain instead of striving for the proverbial "silver bullet" with which to strike the United States. Consider for a moment the attacks of 9/11 and the relative end of the technology spectrum exploited; a flying gas bomb, capable of precise guidance with little-to-no threat of being shot down or diverted off its intended course. Why develop ICBMs, the thinking could go, when you can shoot a nuclear round off a merchant ship underway along New Jersey's coastline? Seem plausible? What about possible? You bet.

Once a country masters the basics of missile technology, it faces no great technical challenge in adding greater range to the missile itself. The improvement can be accomplished rather simply through additional thrust and rocket stages. It also can be accomplished under the guise of developing space launchers: every booster capable of placing satellites into orbit can deliver a warhead of the same weight to an intercontinental target. Envision for a moment a scenario whereby the Chinese announce they soon will launch a commercial satellite into orbit to improve their growing cellular phone service into remote regions of the Chinese interior. Now instead imagine for a moment a substituted scenario whereby the Chinese replace the commercial satellite as the missile's payload and instead upload a nuclear payload, now targeted for Los Angeles... Seem far-fetched? Maybe. But maybe not in light of what we witnessed on 9/11. The mere threat of such a capability is cause for concern, given events of 9/11.

Missiles of relatively short-range launched from commercial ships near the U.S. coastline could threaten about half the population of the United States. And for those who think that missile threats from "rogue states" are unlikely "worst case" scenarios for the future, a short history lesson is in order. The United States has been threatened by a "rogue state" already.

One of the most serious and urgent threats the United States ever faced was from Soviet missiles placed in Cuba. Cuban dictator Fidel Castro recommended to his Soviet sponsors that a nuclear attack be launched against the United States during the missile crisis of 1962. Couldn't happen in America, you say? It already nearly did. Castro's actions, like the

actions of Osama bin Laden after him, prove that the leaders of "rogue states" are willing to use nuclear weapons against the United States.

In a recent statement outlining what is best characterized in the minds of many, Hon. John Bolton, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, said "...had these (sic) people had ballistic missile technology, there's not the slightest doubt in my mind that they would have used it... the September 11 attacks underscored a need to deter the spread of nuclear technology and a need for a U.S. defense against missile attacks."<sup>14</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In comparing then the pre- and post- 9/11 threat trend line, one sees an ever-increasing emphasis being placed upon the potential use of asymmetric WMD married with delivery by unconventional means as a likely enemy course of action within years and not decades as several in the Intelligence Community had led many to believe. Prior to 9/11 the same threat was developing for certain. But who actually could envision such terror being released in such an unconventional manner? And what about the American response to such threats? One need not look any further than the increased presence of the Coast Guard on merchant shipping and the requirement for arriving ships to declare their cargo days prior to entering America's harbors as proof positive that the threat is potentially upon us right now. That's different, drastically different, than the Coast Guard's actions on September 10. But what if the Coast Guard inadvertently let a ship carrying short-range ballistic missiles into America's backyard? Where's our defense against such a threat? Again, deploying a National Missile Defense system could offer an albeit limited, but effective defense against such a threat.

Coupled with the characteristic of the threat – asymmetrical WMD delivered unconventionally – is the added danger posed by the fact that terrorism and its related attacks on innocent civilians has broken "new ground" of sorts. The template for terrorism has been rewritten – again. And an even darker side to terrorism, if such a side is possible, has been revealed. Risk from such attack grew in orders of magnitude since that day and for most of us, deploying a National Missile Defense, which days and weeks before seemed like a good idea, all of a sudden seems like an even better idea.

Why our potential enemies would pursue ballistic missiles has changed slightly since September 11 as well. Since that day, our potential adversaries see that we are vulnerable to attack. And on the ballistic missile front, America has no effective means for shooting down an enemy missile before it strikes America's soil, something not lost on those who are determined to strike the United States of America in a manner consistent with what was witnessed on 9/11.

The risk to every American of being attacked by ballistic missile and other forms and means of asymmetric WMD has never been higher in light of the attacks of 9/11. Our exposure to things we're not comfortable with has never been greater and we must act if we are to "provide for the common defense" as envisioned by our forefathers.

## **MOVEMENT IN THE DEBATE OVER THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DETERRENCE**

### **Pre-9/11**

After spending more than \$70 billion over three decades on more or less urgent research and development, the United States appears finally to be moving toward the deployment of a ballistic missile defense (BMD) system.<sup>15</sup> The proposed system will consist of interceptor missiles and sensors designed to protect all fifty states from a small, long-range ballistic missile attack. Such a system, referred to as National Missile Defense, has been the subject of intense debate in Washington in three distinct periods of recent American history; first in the late 1960s and early 1970s, again in the latter half of the 1980s, and finally since the mid-1990s.<sup>16</sup> Until very recently, its opponents always prevailed. The debate of the late 1990s through pre-9/11, however, concluded with a political consensus in favor of limited NMD deployment.

Previous NMD debates during the Cold War were understandably focused on the U.S. – Soviet balance. At that time, the Soviet long-range missile arsenal constituted a formidable technical challenge for National Missile Defense. "Armed with over 9,000 strategic nuclear warheads by the late 1980s, the Soviet Union posed an enormous threat."<sup>17</sup> Effective NMD protection for American cities against a deliberate Soviet attack, it was argued, would have required a huge and expensive NMD system. This in itself was sufficient at the time to limit support for the program, particularly within the military and Congress.

Given the cost and technical challenges confronting a system intended to protect cities from Soviet missile attack, most NMD proponents of the Reagan era developed a less ambitious goal of protecting not the American population, but instead U.S. strategic retaliatory capabilities against a Soviet nuclear first strike.<sup>18</sup> This less ambitious goal, more technically feasible and affordable, also made sense from a strategy standpoint. Because there was no obvious and immediate need for missile defenses to protect U.S. strategic forces it lacked the necessary political appeal to galvanize support. According to critics, U.S. strategic forces were already protected adequately, and arms control was the preferred method for further reducing the Soviet first-strike threat.<sup>19</sup>

Until the mid 1990s, Washington relied quite comfortably on nuclear deterrence as the proper way to address the Soviet missile threat. During the Cold War, prominent military and civilian officials had generally believed that deterrence, if managed properly, was a reliable tool for preventing Soviet missile attack. Why pay more for missile defense, the argument went, if deterrence provides protection?<sup>20</sup> National Missile Defense was contrary to the prevailing theory of deterrence, commonly referred to as Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), which positively relied on the mutual vulnerability of the United States and Soviet Union to prevent a nuclear holocaust. Considerable resources, both monetary and non-monetary (in terms of arms control negotiations), were exhausted on developing offensive nuclear stockpiles. Any threat to mutual vulnerability, the logic of the day argued, particularly the threat posed by National Missile Defense, was considered “destabilizing.” Indeed, the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) treaty was presented to the Senate for ratification as the codification of the “stability” supposedly guaranteed via mutual vulnerability.<sup>21</sup>

As a result, NMD for the purpose of defending American cities faced a triple challenge:<sup>22</sup>

- prevailing wisdom about effectiveness of deterrence suggested that NMD was unnecessary
- the U.S. specifically identified NMD as a threat to “stability;” and after 1972,
- U.S. NMD programs came up against the ABM treaty and thus the vested interests of Washington’s arms control lobby.

Consequently, NMD proponents not only had to battle politically with the usual arms controllers and opponents of military spending, they were also frequently at odds with the proponents of America’s strategic nuclear deterrent. In short, up to the mid 1990s, National Missile Defense faced severe critics on the left and right. The changed circumstances attending the end of the Cold War, however, have made the rationale for NMD deployment persuasive to many past NMD opponents, and all, save for some technology non-believers, now acknowledge at least in principle, a potentially useful role for NMD.<sup>23</sup>

### **Post-9/11**

A new perspective on the reliability of deterrence has begun to emerge and help Washington move toward a consensus on National Missile Defense. In short, the axiom, “tis better to deter than defend,” particularly when all you know how to do is deter but not how to defend, dominated the debate to the point of conventional wisdom until only very recently.<sup>24</sup> National Missile Defense opponents through the 1990s argued that since deterrence never failed throughout the entire Cold War... “it will work well into the future.”<sup>25</sup>

Such assertions, Keith Payne argued in his work titled, Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age, make the mistake of viewing the practice (as opposed to the theory) of deterrence as relatively simple and predictable. In fact, deterrence frequently is difficult or impossible in practice.<sup>26</sup>

The Gulf War and various post-Cold War crises with Iraq, Serbia, North Korea, and China have encouraged a reassessment of what may reasonably be expected from deterrence. Defense Department, White House, and Congressional reports increasingly acknowledge that the deterrence of regional challengers may not follow Cold War patterns. Their conclusion: given the rogue's relatively unfamiliar goals and values, deterrence cannot be predictable, and indeed may simply fail.<sup>27</sup>

This markedly reduced confidence in the reliability of deterrence has led to an increased appreciation of the need for National Missile Defense in the post-Cold War period – to provide a hedge of protection for the United States in the event deterrence fails. In short, a generally accepted proposition now is that because the deterrence of missile attack cannot be considered reliable, the United States must have some defense.<sup>28</sup> What is more, National Missile Defense is also viewed widely as necessary if regional challengers are to be denied the capability to deter or coerce the United States, thus potentially forcing a shift in the overall goals and objectives for the security of the United States of America.

## **Conclusion**

One need not look very far to confirm that this shift in U.S. opinion concerning deterrence is real. When you consider ongoing operations in Afghanistan and the recent renewal of violence between India and Pakistan over the disputed Kashmir region, you see firsthand the fleeting value associated with deterrence as a strategy. Indeed, coercion seems to be the strategy of the day being exercised by many potential challengers to U.S. hegemony. And the days since 9/11 have only caused many of our political leaders to underscore the importance of U.S. engagement and defense around the world in an attempt to stem the tide of coercion being applied by regional challengers. Deterrence, in the author's opinion is dying. And in its place is the notion that America must first be strong defensively while aggressively engaging regional challengers on every front to limit their ability to challenge U.S. interests around the world. We seem to be entering an era where military strength, both offensive and defensive, are the basis of diplomacy and engagement around the world.

If 9/11 leaves any lasting significance on U.S. views concerning world order (and disorder, for that matter) it is that the United States must engage through strength both enemy



and friend alike to achieve its objectives around the globe. Deterrence worked best in a bi-polar world. In an omni-polar world its utility seems lost among competing interests to the point where strength becomes the single-most important factor in achieving your objectives and promoting your interests. The Department of Defense in its 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report is calling this “detering forward” as opposed to simply deterring.<sup>29</sup> But whatever the label, its intent is clear: the United States will strengthen its forward deterrent posture to promote its objectives and interests abroad.

## **CHANGES IN NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Pre-9/11**

On the domestic side, broad, popular support for the deployment of a National Missile Defense system stems largely from the discussion surrounding a shift in our national security objectives and goals. In short, just as the days of the ABM treaty may be marked in weeks on a calendar verses months, so too is the long-stated goal of deterrence and the fact that it will not work as it once did. In many cases, deterrence may not work at all. This markedly reduced confidence in the reliability of deterrence has led to an increased appreciation of the need for National Missile Defense in the post-Cold War period – to provide a hedge of protection for the United States in the event deterrence fails. The American people and the Congress have adopted the generally accepted position that because the deterrence of missile attack cannot be considered reliable, the United States must have some defense. In stark contrast, the U.S. still has no defense whatsoever against intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), contrary to what most Americans believe.

Pre-9/11 risk from being attacked by a ballistic missile and in-turn, fielding a National Missile Defense system to protect Americans from such an attack, is characterized by a relatively intangible equation: just how much is too much “rogue state” capability? An interesting question, given that the threat of being attacked by a ballistic missile on American soil prior to 9/11 was reserved for the stuff of action movies. Even more interesting is the idea whether our nation’s leaders ever pondered such a threat as a serious challenge to the security of our borders and to the protection of our citizens. Nonetheless, on the eve of 9/11, the threat of missile proliferation, even to the American homeland via long-range missiles, was growing.

Recent assessments by the Intelligence Community of the character of the ballistic missile threat to the United States have echoed the basic themes of the Rumsfeld Commission discussed previously. In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in January,

2000, Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, made a number of significant observations<sup>30</sup> centered on the aspect of risk to the United States from attacks by ballistic missiles on its soil. Most notably,

- the missile threat from countries other than Russia and China is steadily growing
- in the next few years, Iran could test a missile that will be able to hit the United States with a small payload
- countries that were once importers of weapons technology could soon become secondary suppliers. In the near-term, they could supply short-range ballistic missile equipment. But as they develop, they could pass on a broad array of long-range missile technologies
- the acquisition and deployment strategies of the new proliferators are clearly different from those of the major nuclear / ballistic missile powers, in part because a number of them are aided and abetted by several of those same powers. This makes detecting and assessing ballistic missile developments more difficult
- not only is it difficult to provide warning of when a new threat might emerge, it is also difficult to assess the purpose for which such weapons are being acquired and potential uses to which they might be put

And therein lies the difficulty in assessing just how much risk is too much – it's not science but it is based on the observation of several facts. However, unlike science, where one can assume the effect of "X" on "Y" in a controlled environment, determining the intent of the users of ballistic missiles is nearly impossible. Tougher yet, this complex problem set offers no discernable template or model from which to observe the effects of "X", (with "X" being proliferation) on "Y", (with "Y" being the intent of the "rogue state" to use said weapon).

Emphasizing the difficulty of assessing the likely behavior of the emerging threats, CIA Director Tenet responded to a question during the same testimony on alternative delivery means for WMD, stating, "In the world we live in, the concept of deterrence does not apply. I cannot say what is more and what is less likely. The CIA does not make that assessment. Obviously, use of a truck bomb is more likely today; however, missile use may become as likely in the future as truck bombs are today."<sup>31</sup>

The Intelligence Community has all but admitted that the United States homeland is currently vulnerable to attack by North Korea. If North Korea tests / deploys the Taepo Dong-2 (TD-2) it will be able to hold at risk virtually all U.S. territory. But the question remains, "if North Korea tests / deploys the Taepo Dong-2...." That one word – if – captures the intangible unknown here, the essence of risk in the discussion surrounding likelihood from ballistic missile

attack and protection afforded by deploying a National Missile Defense system. Before 9/11, the argument seems plausible that the risk from such an attack by North Korea was low and therefore the deployment of a National Missile Defense system was unnecessary at worst. At its best it seemed that plenty of time was available to think about it and therefore defer any decision until a later date.

But what if the North Koreans were to test / deploy the Taepo Dong-2 today, in light of the reduced effectiveness of deterrence after 9/11? To begin to answer that question it is first necessary to examine how much America's national security goals and objectives have changed since 9/11.

### **Post-9/11**

The gravest of all consequences of 9/11 and indeed, the shrinking world resulting from that day, is that the United States homeland – for years a sanctuary from foreign hostile action – will be in increasing jeopardy of coming under attacks in the years to come. These attacks could go well beyond the run-of-the-mill terrorist acts with which we have become witness to and the horror of 9/11 as thousands of innocent Americans were killed by a senseless and shameless act of terror.

Porous U.S. borders and the sheer number of tempting targets in the United States point toward an increasing likelihood of more strikes on American soil. The next adversary might attempt unconventional warfare operations against military significant targets – airfields, space-control facilities, seaports, command and control installations, and so forth – in an attempt to disrupt U.S. power projection operations. Terrorist attacks directed against civilian targets might also occur again as opponents attempt to deter U.S. involvement against terrorists' interests or raise the cost of our intervention.

So strong is this fear against the threat of terrorism on the United States that the Secretary of Defense in his 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report claims that "the highest priority of the U.S. military is to defend the Nation from all enemies."<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Secretary Rumsfeld reports that "...defending the United States, which is the critical base of operations for U.S. defense activities worldwide, will be a crucial element of DOD's transformation efforts."<sup>33</sup>

Whether these two declarations were part of the original QDR Report or whether they were written in haste post-9/11 is a moot point. What matters most is the fundamental shift taking place within the thinking of the political leaders of this Nation. And while defending the Nation has never been in question, the extent to which the United States of America is now

willing to go to execute such a mission reflects a huge re-prioritization of our country's national security strategy goals and objectives. To claim that it is now "...the highest priority of the U.S. military...to defend the Nation from all enemies..." has enormous implications for national security strategy development, budgeting, and resource allocation within the Federal Government. How American national security strategy is defined from this point forward will ultimately be the subject of intense national and international debate. Whatever the outcome, we are, as Goure` points out, "...at a point in the evolution of the international system at which a new strategic approach to securing the U.S. homeland, our forward deployed forces, and allies from ballistic missile attack is imperative."<sup>34</sup>

## **Conclusion**

What more can be said then of the significance of 9/11 on the momentous task before the Nation – redefining our national security strategy goals and objectives. Clearly, 9/11 has played a huge role in the way in which America will go about its defense business in the future. Exactly what specific approach will be taken remains unknown, but what we do know already is that defending our homeland is job #1 for the United States military in the immediate years to come.

If the activities of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) are any indication of the impact of 9/11, consider the following fact: Before 9/11, NORAD "...was a shadow of its cold-war self. In 1958, it had 5,800 fighter jets at its command. On September 10, it had just 20 – although, since then, many more have been added."<sup>35</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers, testifying February 5 before the Senate Armed Services Committee, said Operation Noble Eagle (defense of the United States of America), has included more than 13,000 combat air patrol sorties over the United States.<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, our national security strategy goals and objectives have changed since 9/11.

## **THE 1972 ANTIBALLISTIC MISSILE (ABM) TREATY RECONSIDERED**

### **Pre-9/11**

Another significant factor worthy of detailed analysis involves the ABM treaty. The treaty, originally a reflection of deterrence theory, was intended to codify the thought that stability was the fruit of mutual vulnerability. And until very recently, the treaty has been treated as sacrosanct. However, the logic of continued, willful U.S. vulnerability to missile attack, along

with the treaty designed to ensure that vulnerability, has not fared well in the post-Cold War environment.

The U.S. ballistic missile defense effort and the issue of revision of the ABM treaty have been extremely sensitive issues. Prior to the attacks of 9/11 the United States seemed poised to scrap the ABM treaty altogether in exchange for a framework in which to view ballistic missile defense that offers “the prospect simultaneously of creating a new consensus within the U.S. political system, addresses Russian concerns, and reassures our allies who in some instances seem quite skeptical about U.S. ballistic missile defense efforts.”<sup>37</sup>

### **Post-9/11**

Likewise, positive changes in the discourse surrounding the questionable relevance of the 1972 ABM treaty have proceeded at breakneck speed since the events surrounding 9/11. Today, President Bush has notified the Congress and President Putin of Russia that the United States intends to withdraw from the 1972 ABM treaty after a mandatory six-month review period. The argument for withdrawing, framed in large part since 9/11, reflects the Administration’s intent to field an operational NMD system in the near-term to help defend America against attack by ballistic missile. And it is here – in the changes being discussed since 9/11 concerning the ABM treaty – that one of the greatest shifts in the debate to deploy or not to deploy a National Missile Defense system is taking place. Indeed, recent dialogue between the Presidents of the United States and Russia concerning the future of National Missile Defense, reductions in offensive nuclear stockpiles, and the emergence of shared global interests throughout the post-9/11 world have grabbed the headlines of newspapers around the globe.

While it is fact that the decision to deploy a modest national missile defense has already been made – it was signed into law in 1999 – the President at that time, William Jefferson Clinton, announced that implementing this decision would depend on an assessment of the nature of the threat, the technological capabilities of the system, its cost, and lastly, the impact on relations with allies and potential adversaries.<sup>38</sup> And it is here – inside the 1972 ABM treaty and our relations with allies and potential adversaries - where the impact of events of 9/11 are taking hold and shifting the “status quo” of the debate to deploy a National Missile Defense.

Put simply, the Cold War regime banning missile defenses is under pressure. And that pressure is hardest felt today in the ongoing search for relevance by proponents of the 1972 ABM treaty. As a result of the attacks on the U.S. homeland, the United States is more likely than before to unilaterally improve its strategic defenses. That’s not to imply supporting courses

of action aren't being considered. According to Jeffrey Larsen and James Wirtz, in their recent book titled, Rockets' Red Glare: Missile Defenses and the Future of World Politics (2001), "the near-consensus of the Western world in opposing the terrorists who perpetrated this (9/11) attack, and which led to unprecedented international military cooperation, may also lead to accommodation between Russia and the United States in revising the ABM Treaty."<sup>39</sup>

And so it was on the eve of President Vladimir Putin's historic trip to the United States in November of last year. In establishing the context, the United States and Russia appeared openly communal concerning the future of National Missile Defense. Even more so, the 1972 ABM treaty seemed headed for the scrap heap of treaty history. Indeed, the Russians appeared to be coming around on the (ABM) issue. Said Lee Bockhorn, in an October 12 story for the Weekly Standard, "...Vladimir Putin is beginning to recognize that (President) Bush will not allow the ABM treaty to remain a permanent obstacle to deploying missile defenses..."<sup>40</sup> And in a press conference scheduled to mark the one-month anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President Bush offered his most forceful argument for missile defense, saying "...the case is more strong today than it was on September 10 and that the ABM treaty is outmoded, outdated, (and) reflects a different time."<sup>41</sup>

In point of fact, the hype and craze associated with President Putin's November trip to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, Texas left us all wondering if such a historic deal was within the reach of these two heads of state. Watching the news reports associated with the visit was captivating. One had a sense that history was in the making between these two world leaders. What actually emerged on the heels of the summit was an important step in yet another series of important steps to be taken concerning the deployment of a National Missile Defense system. As for the ABM treaty, we were to learn that it resembled yet again the infamous tale of the cat with nine lives – it survived for yet another day – barely.

Coming out of Crawford (Texas) the two leaders agreed that the United States and Russia would allow extensive testing to develop a missile defense system and aim to cut strategic nuclear warheads by about two-thirds under a deal that emerged between the two leaders. "This agreement would not scrap the ABM treaty, which U.S. officials said remains the ultimate goal of negotiations with Russia, but would allow the administration to move ahead with the vigorous testing and development programs it hopes to begin early next year,"<sup>42</sup> according to a recent article in the Washington Post.

## Conclusion

Since the historic meeting between these two leaders, President Bush has informed President Putin that the United States will indeed withdraw from the 1972 ABM accord. The decision itself represents a substantial breakthrough twelve months after President Bush came into office and made missile defense his top foreign policy priority in the face of adamant Russian opposition to dropping the 1972 ABM pact. It further underscores just how far the two former Cold War adversaries have moved in transforming their relations, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks opened new areas of cooperation.

Clearly then, the events surrounding 9/11 have had a "dislodging" effect on the "status quo" of the debate surrounding the ABM treaty and thus improving the likelihood of a National Missile Defense deployment in the near-term. As unfortunate as the events of 9/11 were, the possibility of fulfilling what President Reagan envisioned eighteen years ago when he asked, "...wouldn't it be better to save lives than to avenge them?"<sup>43</sup> make the push to deploy a National Missile Defense system a noble, albeit necessary, endeavor.

## SUMMARY

In summary, the answer to the question whether or not a National Missile Defense system was needed prior to 9/11 involves a complex mixture of events and an understanding of the criteria used to frame the discussion up to this point. First off, dramatic changes in the international security environment and in American domestic opinion have contributed heavily to the establishment of a consensus in favor of National Missile Defense deployment.<sup>44</sup> The post-Cold War environment is best characterized by the realization that the phenomenon of ballistic missile proliferation reflects a shift in the strategic environment. At the strategic level, this shift is a function of the collapse of the old bipolar international order. Simply put, nations are pursuing new strategic capabilities because they perceive their security to be at risk in ways it was not during the Cold War. United States defense planners include ballistic missile as part of the so-called asymmetric threats being acquired by potential adversaries as a way of countering U.S. conventional superiority. What they often fail to fully appreciate, according to Daniel Goure in his work, Defense of the Homeland Against Strategic Attack, "is the extent to which the search for asymmetric responses to U.S. power reflects a deep concern regarding how the U.S. is behaving in the world and an apparent belief that the U.S. can be deterred by such new-style threats."<sup>45</sup>

This suggests that under the right circumstances proliferating states may not be deterred by the U.S. advantage in strategic nuclear forces from brandishing their ballistic missiles or worse yet, even from using them.<sup>46</sup> This thought is critical in understanding the de-evolution of deterrence as an ineffective tool for diplomacy in the post-Cold War era. In practical terms, its apparent value went out with the demise of the former Soviet Union. What's alarming from a diplomatic and military perspective is that we have been slow to realize this and our defense against WMD has been marginalized with the ever-increasing amounts of rhetoric and discourse over the topic of should we or should we not deploy a National Missile Defense system.

Since 9/11 the debate over the effectiveness of deterrence has been met with a dramatic shift in American national security goals and objectives, one which today considers homeland security, and in-turn, defense, as the top priority of the Department of Defense. This shift in thinking, coupled with the recent decision by the United States to withdraw from the 1972 ABM treaty, accounts for the bulk of measured forward movement in the discourse calling for the deployment of a National Missile Defense system.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the need to deploy a National Missile Defense system is greater today in light of events surrounding 9/11 than it was before. Through a complex mixture of events and a post-9/11-inspired respect for the risks posed by "rogue states" possessing asymmetrical weapons of mass destruction capable of delivery by unconventional means, America has found its course for the future. As part of that course, deploying a limited National Missile Defense system is not only in our best interests, but absolutely critical if Americans are to retain their freedom from attack along and within their borders.

Deploying a modest National Missile Defense system today would stretch the current technological limits without breaking them, is fiscally viable, and would allow the United States to approach Russia with a proposal to withdraw from the ABM treaty and allow for limited national missile defenses in a cooperative defensive regime. With good fortune and common goals, the results of our efforts could lead to a successful transition to a world where missile defenses replace offensive capabilities and play a role in maintaining international stability.

And in a perhaps triumphal final salute to the post-Cold War era, the events of 9/11 will be remembered forever as having as much an impact as any in determining whether or not we transition to this world where a missile defense obviates the need for a missile offense.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Kernan Chaisson, Building Fortress America: U.S. Homeland Defense, The Journal of Electronic Defense, October 2001, (Horizon House Publications, Inc.), 68.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Keith B. Payne, The Case for National Missile Defense, Orbis, A Journal of World Affairs, Volume 44, Number 2, Spring 2000, (Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute), 190.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Daggett and Robert D. Shuey, National Missile Defense: Status of the Debate, Congressional Research Service (CRS), The Library of Congress, Report for Congress, (Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress Press), CRS-5.

<sup>7</sup> Floyd D. Spence, Chairman, House National Security Committee, United States Congress, "GAO Report Validates GOP Concerns," Foreign Missile Threats: Analytic Soundness of Certain National Intelligence Estimates, GAO/NSIAD-96-225, August 1996, available from <http://www.house.gov/house/104thcongress.html>; Internet. Accessed 12 December 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, Report to the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States. Presented to the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, 15 July 1998. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Goure, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report, (Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, September 30, 2001), 31.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> The Heritage Foundation's Commission on Missile Defense, Defending America: A Plan to Meet the Urgent Missile Threat, (Washington, D.C.: Publications Department, The Heritage Foundation, March, 1999), 10.

<sup>14</sup> Hon. John Bolton, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, International Herald Tribune, November 1, 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Payne, 187.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 188.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 189.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 192.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Keith B. Payne, Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age, (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 45-49.

<sup>27</sup> Payne, The Case for National Missile Defense, 193.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 194.

<sup>29</sup> Rumsfeld, Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report, 20.

<sup>30</sup> George Tenet, DCI, "Current and Future Worldwide Threats to U.S. National Security," Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, January 3, 2000.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Rumsfeld, Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 19, 20.

<sup>34</sup> Goure`, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Abraham McLaughlin, "Pentagon Homeland Role: Office in Search of a Mission," available from <http://www.ebird.dtic.mil>; Internet. Accessed 25 February 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Bruce Rolfsen, "Ready or Not," available from <http://www.ebird.dtic.mil>; Internet. Accessed 25 February 2002.

<sup>37</sup> Goure`, 18.

<sup>38</sup> "National Missile Defense Decision," July 23, 1999; available from <http://www.clinton4.nara.gov/WH/new/html>; Internet. Accessed 12 December 2001.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey A. Larsen and James J. Wirtz, "U.S. Missile Defenses: Three Scenarios and their International Consequences," excerpts taken from book by same authors, titled, *Rockets' Red Glare: Missile Defense and the Future of World Politics*, National Security Studies Quarterly, Volume VII, Issue 4 (Autumn 2001), (Washington, D.C.: Center for Peace and Security Studies, Georgetown University), 83-84.

<sup>40</sup> Lee Bockhorn, "A New Day for Missile Defense"; available from <http://www.WeeklyStandard.com>; Internet. Accessed 12 October 2001.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Walter Pincus and Alan Sipress, "Missile Defense Deal is Likely, Testing Would Get a Green Light; ABM Pact Intact;" available from <http://www.WashingtonPost.com>; Internet. Accessed 1 November 2001.

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<sup>45</sup> Goure, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



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