

Submission regarding Australian involvement in Missile Defence

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The US missile defence system (MD) poses grave threats to global security

- 1.** Missile defence is an offensive weapons program in that it endows a capacity to attack with impunity. While it is not planned to counter a massive missile attack, its reach is global, exposing an ambition to render potential enemies impotent, tactically and strategically. It takes the USA beyond the normative constraints of strategic balance and deterrence. It meets no defensive need because (a) there is no serious ballistic missile threat to the USA or its allies, and (b) it is made redundant by the deterrent value of US military might (which is under no challenge). The USA's policies to maintain its military pre-eminence, including domination of space, re-enforce perceptions of MD offensiveness.
- 2.** Despite its global dimensions, MD may prove to have little deterrent value. It is inherently vulnerable to being overwhelmed by multiple warheads or simple countermeasures, including low-technology decoys. Countries not allied to the United States could be tempted to exploit its weaknesses, making the system particularly destabilising and escalating the arms race.
- 3.** MD is the most expensive weapons program in history. Its budgets, past (\$100-200b), present (\$10b annually) and future (\$19b annually), represent astronomical diversions of resources from meeting the urgent threats to human security of poverty and environmental degradation, including global warming.
- 4.** MD enervates international law. It is undermining nuclear disarmament agreements, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). It has been the death knell of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, and has put at risk the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks treaty.
- 5.** MD is a space weapons program and exposes US preparedness to weaponise space. This is against the spirit of international space law and is obstructing re-negotiation of the Outer Space Treaty and realisation of a Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) treaty.
- 6.** The US Space Command is working to ensure that a military space corridor between Earth and the planets beyond is reserved for private corporate interests. The Moon, Mars and other planetary bodies contain the untapped resources and riches of the future. In June 1997 NASA announced plans for manned mining colonies on Mars. The United States unfortunately does not have a vision of shared development opportunities.
- 7.** Against the deeply-held tradition that space is rightfully a domain of peace and a global commons (a tradition as precious to Americans as to the rest of the world), MD threatens to give birth to an arms race in space.
- 8.** MD threatens to provoke proliferation of conventional and nuclear armaments; of ballistic missiles; of anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons. Given its vulnerability to less sophisticated weaponry, MD may promote growth in so-called 'asymmetric' warfare.
- 9.** The history of long-range missile defence is beset with unacceptable numbers of test failures; project cancellations; prescribed and faked tests; contract and budget overruns; and inflated claims by developers and the Pentagon. MD is so technologically challenging many doubt its feasibility.

10. The Ground-Based Interceptor (GBI) program deployed in Alaska and California (and planned for deployment in Eastern Europe) remains developmental and its operational effectiveness unproven. In 2005, the program's director, Air Force Lt General Henry A. Oberling, was able to give GMD only a "greater than zero chance" of working.

Australian participation in MD will risk, not enhance, Australian security

11. MD involvement will compromise Australian independence and distort its foreign relations. It will alienate many Asia-Pacific neighbours, including China.

12. The distinction between theatre missile defence (TMD) and national missile defence (NMD) has become blurred. The recent US shooting down of a satellite using the Aegis theatre missile system proved how easy it is to morph "theatre" missile technology into "strategic" use.

13. The Aegis system is demonstrably an anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon, a form of offensive space warfare technology. The three air-warfare destroyers currently under construction in Australia will carry the Aegis system. Australian procurement of Aegis missile defence technology will re-enforce perceptions that Australia is a US surrogate and a willing partner in the offensive capacities of MD.

14. These developments are provocative, destabilising and highly prejudicial to Australia's security and economic future.

15. Proponents are yet to demonstrate how MD involvement will guarantee Australian access to worthwhile intelligence and technology transfer, or advantage local industry.

16. For an adversary wishing to penetrate MD, Australian missile defence installations would become priority nuclear targets.

We therefore recommend:

17. That the Australian Government actively support the decisive call at the United Nations by the world community for the use of space "for peaceful purpose ... carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all countries." Arming the heavens will only put us one step closer to a disastrous war in space that no one can win.

18. That the Australian Government join the international movement to ban space-based and anti-satellite weapons and keep regulation of space in the hands of the UN.

19. That Australia add its diplomatic weight to international efforts to persuade the USA to support the proposed PAROS treaty.

20. That the Australian Government take steps to ensure that the Pine Gap and JORN radar facilities cease to be an integral part of the US missile defence program.

21. That the Federal Government maintain ALP policy and reject any further involvement in the United States missile defence project. Indeed, in our view, it would be appropriate for the security, economic and political interests of our country, if the Australian Government withdrew entirely from the United States missile defence program.