

APPENDIX B: MAIN ARGUMENTS IN DEFENSE OF NMD

By Ed Rowny

The threat is not real and credible.

A panel of distinguished experts unanimously concluded in the 1998 Rumsfeld report that the threat is not only real but imminent. It disagreed with an earlier CIA estimate that no state possesses a missile capable of attacking the United States and that we would have a five-year warning before development of such a weapon would begin. Rumsfeld concluded that, in addition to the existing arsenals of Russia and China, North Korea, Iran, and Iraq have advanced development programs underway which could allow them to strike the United States in five or more years. This timeframe could be shortened by the transfer of missiles or components from other countries. There is no credible evidence to contradict the Rumsfeld report.

The technology is not mature.

Although the space-based technology critical to developing a boost-phase missile defense—the most effective system for defending against ballistic missile attack—is at least ten years in the future, terminal and mid-course NMD technology is developing rapidly. But this does not preclude continued development, and since we cannot afford to wait for an ideal solution, we should proceed to deploy other options in the interim. Terminal missile defense technologies are more advanced. The U.S. possesses the technology to deploy a Force Missile Defense system (FMD). The Patriot system that was employed against the Scuds in the Gulf War is being improved by the addition of the more capable PAC-3 system. The United States and its allies are engaged in three joint research and development programs for ballistic missile defense: the Europeans (MEADS), the Israelis (Arrow), and the Japanese (Aegis). The Arrow, which can destroy 92% of ballistic missiles up to 500 miles at a reasonable cost, has already been deployed. The development of a National ballistic Missile Defense (NMD) system has admittedly been a long process. The history of scientific developments especially of sophisticated systems is neither quick nor easy. Practically all of our modern missile systems, such as the Atlas, Minuteman, Peacekeeper, and D5 suffered failures on the road to becoming effective systems. The layered system of the US program consists of terminal, mid-course and boost phase defenses. The Patriot PAC-3 and NMD hit-to-kill technology appear to be similar at first glance. However, they use different types of sensors on their kill vehicles, and the PAC-3 is endoatmospheric whereas NMD is exoatmospheric. The PAC-3 has achieved successful intercepts in 10 out of 11 attempts, demonstrating that the key technology works. The Army's Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system has had two successful intercepts and could begin deployment in 2005. The Navy's Aegis missile system, the best candidate for mid-course defense, is proceeding rapidly and will be ready for deployment by 2005. The Air Force's Airborne Laser system is experiencing success and should have its first operational

test in 2003. A space-based laser system is under development, but is not expected to be ready for a number of years.

BMD, and especially NMD, is too expensive.

Most critics concede that FMD against Scuds can be produced at a reasonable cost and that R/TMD systems such as Arrow are not significantly more expensive. They contend that NMD costs are prohibitive. Estimates of an effective NMD system vary greatly, ranging from \$30 to \$100 billion over a ten-year period. Much depends on the number and type of systems desired and the degree of acceptable risk. A layered system of terminal, mid-course, and boost-phase defense, while entailing the least risk, would be the most expensive. On the other hand, a space-based system, such as the “Brilliant Pebbles” program that was canceled in 1993, could have been operational today for a cost of \$20 billion. The answer to the question of how much the US should spend on NMD needs to be calculated in the context of our security requirements. Congress is appropriating \$40 billion to meet the costs of the terrorist attack on New York and Washington, D.C.. A single ballistic missile with a nuclear warhead would cause far greater damage, and the costs in human terms would be inestimable. Since a rogue state could be expected to strike several US targets, the physical damage could be valued in excess of \$200 billion. It is in this context that, even if the high estimate were accepted, spending \$10 billion a year for ten years on missile defense should be calculated.

NMD risks an arms race with Russia.

The argument is that Russia considers the ABM Treaty a cornerstone of its stability and that abrogation or even modification of the Treaty will cause Moscow to increase its strategic offensive power. The old view of strategic stability and first and second strike scenarios are no longer valid. Russians concede that the United States (and for that matter Russia as well) are vulnerable to attacks by rogue states. However, Russian leaders continue to make ABM arguments a matter of religious dogma. We should recognize this propaganda for what it is. The Russians cannot afford to maintain even their current stockpile of nuclear weapons and should be encouraged to make radical reductions in tandem with U.S. reductions. More skillful diplomacy by the US can bring this about, especially in view of President Putin’s statements that he seeks better relations with the United States in mutually fighting international terrorism and in the interest of helping Russia’s economy.

NMD exacerbates our relations with China.

China continues to follow the lead of Russia in exploiting the propaganda value of the inviolable sanctity of the ABM Treaty. Beijing also warns that any help we give to Taiwan to deploy a regional defense system will result in China increasing the number of its strategic nuclear weapons. This is a hollow threat. China will continue to increase the number of its ICBMs from 20 to at least 200 irrespective of any other factors. We should capitalize upon China’s desire to host a successful Olympics to cause them to become a more responsible member of the international

community. The Bush Administration should be urged to accept this diplomatic challenge.

NMD will weaken our NATO ties.

One of the failures of our diplomacy is the rift with some of our most important NATO allies over our determination to proceed with NMD. On the one hand, Russia has convinced them that any changes or abandonment of the ABM Treaty threatens Russia and weakens international stability. On the other hand, Russia has convinced our NATO allies that they can develop a T/RMD and FMD. While welcoming Russia's cooperation with NATO, we must guard against their using it as a device to extract concessions from the US. We should recognize that the leftist administrations of France and Germany are a major cause of our misunderstanding with these countries. Our heightened diplomacy with Great Britain has already paid dividends in turning around Prime Minister Tony Blair to our approach to NMD. Most other NATO nations have been and continue to be with us. We have an opportunity now that NATO supports our declaration of war against terrorists to convince the NATO nations that rogue states could escalate the war into the next phase by threatening to attack the United States with ballistic missiles.

NMD threatens international agreements.

Critics argue that by changing the ABM Treaty or by giving notice and withdrawing from its obligations in order to allow NMD deployment, we are withdrawing support for international agreements across the board. Putting the matter in perspective the ABM Treaty and CTBT are only two out of scores of international agreements that we enthusiastically support and by which we steadfastly abide. Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction should continue to receive our full support. The sole criterion for our entrance into an international agreement should be whether it serves our national interest. Most treaties do, but we should have the courage to modify or reject those that do not. The contention that this approach signals a weakening of our international cooperation is specious.

NMD dollars should go to combating terrorism.

A frequent argument against NMD is that there are higher priorities for our defense dollars. It is true that terrorists can use biological and chemical attacks (from which we have so far been spared), sabotage our vessels, and commandeer jumbo jets to wreak havoc and do untold damage. We should and in fact are doubling our expenditures to deter and deal with such attacks. However, this does not mean that the threat of a ballistic attack by a rogue state is lessened. Indeed, a terrorist organization or rogue state emboldened by its recent success in New York and Washington could conclude that it is time to escalate the terror campaign to its next phase. While we must be careful how we spend our defense dollars, we can afford to counter both asymmetric and ballistic missile terrorist threats. In fact, the present expenditures on counter-terrorism exceed those of all missile defense programs.

