

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 21, 2003

Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

We are writing to raise our concern with the Department of Defense's approach to National Missile Defense. As members of Congress who support an effective ballistic missile defense system, we are increasingly worried that DoD is taking steps to limit congressional oversight of this critical program and putting its effectiveness at risk through a rushed development and deployment schedule that does not allow for oversight, system definition, or cost and effectiveness analysis.

While the concept of missile defense has been explored since World War II, the Administration's significant restructuring of the program and aggressive push to develop a layered system raises a number of serious questions about the overall focus of the program. Among the steps taken that deserve a full and honest exchange between Congress and the Administration are:

- the significant increase in funding requested from and provided by Congress over the last three years and an evaluation of its benefits,
- the change in the aim of the program to focus more directly on developing development options for a 'layered' capability to intercept ballistic missiles at all stages of their flight path,
- an assessment of a new, untried development and acquisition strategy,
- an assessment of the impact of the United States withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty on the global security picture
- the deployment of a mid-course missile defense system in California and Alaska
- DoD's intention to limit operational testing of the system
- The focus on exploring long-range technologies at the expense of deploying proven technology, such as PAC-3.

In his May 1, 2001, speech at the National Defense University, President Bush expressed a cautious and consultative approach to developing a missile shield, stating that "we will evaluate what works and what does not. We know that some approaches will not work. We know that we will be able to build on our successes. When ready and working with Congress, we will deploy missile defenses to strengthen global security and stability."

Despite the promise to work with Congress, the Department of Defense announced in December of last year its decision to field an initial missile defense capability in 2004-2005. While we agree with the overall objective of protecting the American people from the ballistic missile threat, we do not believe, particularly if the threat is a significant one, that we should rush to field a system that has not yet proven its ability effectiveness.

Several technical concerns have been raised over the history of the program. And it appears to many of us that the Department of Defense's decision in January 2002 to consolidate defense missile programs under a new agency, combined with the decision to use evolutionary acquisition with spiral development to develop and acquire missile defense systems; the decision to exempt missile defense programs from certain reporting requirements; and the decision to classify missile defense testing and program information are steps that undermine the credibility of the program by hindering effective oversight.

DoD's latest step -- to request a waiver for the system from operational testing -- would allow the deployment of an unproven defense system to serve as the United States's last line of defense against a ballistic missile attack and is simply irresponsible.

As the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Tom Ridge, has observed on a number of occasions, while the task of protecting the United States presents a myriad of challenges, a terrorist only needs to get their attack right once. As such we owe the American people a system that has a close to 100 percent success rate. The Pentagon's top evaluator of weapons program, Thomas P. Christie, recently issued a report that raises serious questions about the usefulness or effectiveness of the Administration's missile defense deployment plan in Alaska and California by the end of 2004.

Congress will shortly begin considering the Department's \$9.1 billion request for Missile Defense for Fiscal Year 2004. As we consider this significant request, we would appreciate your views on the matters raised above.

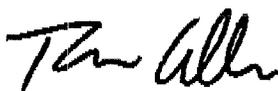
Sincerely,



Ellen O. Tauscher
Member of Congress



Joseph Hoeffel
Member of Congress



Tom Allen
Member of Congress



Adam Schiff
Member of Congress