

Statement by Rep. Tom Allen
Press Conference on the President's Missile Defense Plan
June 12, 2001

I am pleased to be here today, with hundreds of concerned citizens who have come to Washington with a simple message for policymakers:

- The President's fast-track missile defense will make the world less stable.
- Rushing deployment of national missile defense (NMD) will provoke other nations to increase their offensive arms, and undermine U.S. national security.
- Abandoning arms control agreements and gambling on unproven missile defense technologies is unsafe and unwise.

Through the centuries, military history has been a battle between the sword and the shield. Building a better shield has always compelled the forging of a better sword. The Bush Administration must explain why it thinks this missile shield is exempt from the laws of history.

A national missile defense may be justified if proven to work reliably and consistently and to improve our overall national security. But President Bush still has offered no specifics. Congress and the American public must demand answers to these questions that the Administration has failed to address: (1) Can NMD technology be proven to work reliably and consistently? (2) What is the cost? (3) Will NMD improve our overall national security? (4) Is NMD a proportional response to a credible threat?

I serve on the House Armed Services Committee, which reviews threats to our security. The U.S. Intelligence Community recently issued a report on global threats and challenges we may face by 2015. As the chart shows, these threats are many and diverse. Rogue state missile threats to the U.S. are only one.

Unwisely, the Bush Administration has chosen to spend most of our political and financial capital on this one threat. By putting too many eggs in this basket, we underfund programs to fight more likely threats from weapons of mass destruction, such as delivery by truck, boat, or suitcase, not to mention other challenges like global warming, terrorism, crime, and disease.

The latest front in the ideological crusade is last week's announcement by Secretary Rumsfeld of a plan to deploy five interceptors in Alaska by 2004, before testing is completed, before the technology is proven, before adequate radars are in place. Those who characterize the Rumsfeld idea as a "scarecrow" defense have a point.

Bush Administration officials claim their strategic policy reflects new thinking in a new security environment. I believe the President's plan is Cold War ideology applied to a new and different world. U.S. security will pay a heavy price for their failure to understand that the world has changed since the President's advisors last served in government positions.

The "build first, ask questions later" approach is targeted not at foreign missiles, but at the at the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) Treaty. It is premised on the inaccurate and misleading notion that the ABM Treaty prevents development of missile defenses. This second chart lists all the missile defense testing, on a range of systems, that can occur under current Treaty parameters. We can proceed to test technologies, and have plenty of time to discuss Treaty modifications with the Russians. Fiscal sanity and reality dictate we fly before we buy, not the other way around.

President Bush has previously stated that the U.S. missile defense system would protect allies as well as the U.S. If he is sincere, then the President should encourage European and other nations to share in the financial and political costs of deploying a joint missile shield. To encourage this process, I will soon introduce legislation to require the President to seek burdensharing contributions from allied nations that are intended to receive protection from a U.S. missile defense system. It's only fair that if our allies want to play, they'll have to pay.

Again, I applaud these citizens who have come from all across the country to speak out against this ideologically-driven, technologically unproven national missile defense, and for a national security policy directed at the most likely threats, not the least likely one.