**Consequence of building the National Missile Defense.**

The Bush administration states that given the growing ballistic missile industry in other countries and the current political role of the United States in the world, and especially after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States government has to prepare itself for attacks of any kind. The claim is that the building of a National Missile Defense will provide more security to the people of the United States, and will in fact ensure the safety of every citizen of the United States within its territory (Handberg 13). But the proponents forget to take into account the dire consequences of building such a horrendous space weapons system.

Since the beginning of the nuclear age, both the United States and the Soviet

Union have been searching for effective ways to defend themselves against nuclear attack. In the early 1960’s, the Soviet Union’s superiority of invention in long-range ballistic missiles forced the United States to reevaluate its air-defense system. This nuclear race was a major facet of the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union. The cold war was still fully active when president Ronald Reagan proposed the building of National Missile Defense System. Originally, this plan called for development of a space based weapons system that could detect and destroy ballistic missiles of any kind, launched against the United States from any distance, without causing harm to the people or the environment of the United States. (Rip 3)

Currently, chances of the United States being attacked by ballistic missiles of long range are very low, or do not exist at all (Ellis 1). Even though the United States government suspects that countries like North Korea and Iran or for that matter any Islamic state, may launch such an attack, these countries are not in possession of weapons of mass destruction with capabilities of harming the United States. In the book by Anthony Cordesman called Strategic Threats and National Missile Defenses: Defending the U.S. Homeland he states “No proliferant state currently has the ability to strike the United States with ballistic missiles. If threats do emerge, US conventional superiority or, if necessary, offensive nuclear forces will deter attacks on the United States” **(**Cordesman 87).

Up to this day Iraq was on the top list of ‘potential nuclear threat’ to the United States. The Bush administration publicly announced that they had evidence of Iraq’s possession of weapons of mass destruction. With that promise many soldiers were herded down there only to find these nuclear weapons and free the people of Iraq and secure the United States. As it turned out, this was not the case. In fact weapons of destruction of any kind, were not present in the territory of Iraq. But as the search for “imagined” nukes went on, so did the death toll kept going up. This of course brings out an excellent question. Maybe, just maybe sources other than the Central Intelligence Agency are correct in saying that “currently there no country is capable of striking the US with ballistic missiles.” The author of The Missile Defense Controversies, Earnest Yanarealla puts it best the US’s role as ultimate judge, as the following:

The United States sees itself as a redemptive force with a God-given responsibility to root out evil and spread goodness throughout the world either by shining moral example or, when necessary, by the swift and sure military sword of justice”(Yanarealla). Of course these assumptions do leave one to question the necessity of such extreme measures.

Although the US government is insisting on building this missile defense system, the Pentagon hasn’t thoroughly tested the system. Seven tests of hitting an airborne target were conducted. The Pentagon states that all seven were successful, and that the US government is ready to start this project. But a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Theodore A. Postol, in his article “Why Missile Defense Won’t Work” explains how the tests were conducted, and how they were in fact unsuccessful. In his detailed article, he clearly explains that in the first two tests, the system failed to distinguish between the target warhead and a set of decoys that were shaped like warheads. Modern nuclear missiles all launch multiple decoys along with one or more warheads. After this failure in the first two tests, the multiple realistically-shaped decoys were replaced by a single large balloon-shaped decoy in all of the later tests. In order to make the tests appear successful, the unidentifiable decoys were removed from the test field. Dr. Postol states:

“All the problematic shortfalls in the defense system discovered in the first two experiments have been removed through the painstaking designing of a set of decoys that would never used by any adversary, but would make it possible to distinguish warheads from decoys in flight test” (Yanarella 86).

This of course does not stop the Bush administration from building this system. The administration insists on pursuing this until they get the results they need. Given enough time and money this system will work. This project is given the top priority and it has unlimited budget (GPO par11).

Another controversial issue about the National Missile Defense system is the cost to the American public. In his book David Multimer called ‘The Weapons State: Proliferation and the Framing of Security ‘ says that:

“Effective missile defenses are difficult to build – not the least because America’s adversaries have every incentive to find ways to defeat them – and that the investment of billions would produce only a high-tech sieve.”

This project will be the single most expensive project in the history of the United States. The Chairman of the Missile Defense Program and the AMB Treaty Committee, Senator Joseph R. Biden, estimates the cost to be between sixty billion and one hundred billion dollars (2). And perhaps the price might go up to half a trillion dollars, depending on the exact system that the US government develops (GPO 15). This amount will mean more taxes from every citizen. Instead of spending this amount of money building the National Missile Defense system, the US government would be better served paying off the national debt to its citizens.

As we all know the recent attacks of September 11 weren’t nuclear; they were realized by using civilian airplanes as a weapon. These attacks claimed more than three thousands lives. Considering the unavailability of nuclear weapons at present, these kinds of attacks are more likely to occur than nuclear attacks. With this notion in mind, the US government will be better of focusing its attention, and money on increasing security at airports, malls, or other public places. More attention should be paid on water reserves, or campuses.

One of more serious consequence of building the National Missile Defense is that it would be a violation of the Antiballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, signed between the Soviet Union and the United States as a way to control the danger of nuclear war. The treaty bans the building of weapons of such capacity (Nordeen 226). The US government can start this project only with the consent of Russia, and the Russian president didn’t give its approval for the violation of this treaty. The Bush administration did violate this treaty in 2002. The Us government has to remember that, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia still is in possession of all of its nuclear arsenal. This violation means that now the Russian Federation has all right to start developing counter measure so that the United States defense system could be penetrated. The violation of this treaty also means that the Russian Federation is allowed to help any country in the development of its nuclear weapons. Already, Russia is helping Iran in developing its nuclear facilities, and as we know Iran is one of potential threats to the US. The violation of this treaty puts no restraints on Russia’s assistance to any country willing to build nuclear weapons. There are many countries willing to develop such facilities for offensive or defensive purposes, and they are willing to pay handsome amount for such assistance. Of course this has not started as of yet, but surely implications are there.

At present the only state that has the power to launch weapons of mass destruction against the United States is Russia. Dean Rusk, Secretary of State in 1984 stated, “It would be foolish in the extreme to suppose that we could obtain any significant or lasting advantage over the Soviets in space weaponry” (Cordesman). Although the Russia of today is not the same as the Soviet Union of 1984, it is still very powerful in the field of nuclear weapons. The violation of this treaty would greatly encourage Russia to upgrade its weapons. An upgrade of nuclear weapons by Russia could trigger another dangerous arm race, which would lead to Cold War once again. The author of ‘Defending America’ James Lindsay states that:

“Most countries, including many of America’s closest allies, warn that missile defense will trigger an arms race jeopardize three decades of arms control efforts.”

Everybody remembers how dreadful those times were. The infusion of constant fear and anxiety on peoples’ minds were beyond what words could express.

But in the absence of a National Missile Defense system, Russia is currently willing to decrease its production of nuclear weapons (Ellis 89). These statistics show the superiority of Russia in nuclear weapons. It would be a good move by the United States to do the same. In fact, these two nations could cooperate in fighting against the unconventional production of nuclear weapons by other states. The statistics in the book called ‘Strategic Threats and National Missile Defenses’ by Anthony Cordesman show that the US posses 33,500 nuclear weapons, and Russia posses 62,500 nuclear weapons. If the United States agreed on nuclear arm reduction, then this move would reduce the risk of the United States being attacked by weapons of mass destruction. Once this nuclear arms race between the Russian Federation and the United States begins, the consequences of could be devastating, both for the US and Russia as well as for the entire globe, resulting in ultimate destruction of the planet earth.

With Russia’s help, the US government could actually avoid the threat of being attacked with weapons of mass destruction, and reduce the nuclear production of both nations. Building bigger weapons could make the United States more powerful, but this will increase our enemy’s desire to harm the US more. This will create more hatred against Americans. Having a more powerful nuclear arsenal is not what makes a number one nation. The United States and Russia could really change the world, and stop this nuclear race, and bring peace to earth, rather than attempting to find security in a technological solution.

One of the overlooked peaces in this riddle is China. China does posses nuclear weapons, and the building of the National Missile Defense will incite China to upgrade its nuclear arsenal. China does not want the United States to have superiority over them. Unlike Russia, China is not a declining power but a rising one, and again, unlike Russia, China has specific territorial issues over Taiwan over which it could conceivably wage a war with the United States. As Saira Khan, the author of Nuclear Proliferation Dynamics in Protracted Conflict Regions: a Comparative Study of South Asia and the Middle East says:

No one should be surprised, then, that Beijing looks skeptically on President George W. Bush’s claim that ‘America’s development of defenses is a search of security, not a search of advantage.’”

So as we can see China doesn’t look too favorably on this issue either, and China should be considered in making such decisions.

Right now the building of a National Missile Defense system should not be the main concern of the United States government. The government should carefully consider everything before jumping to any conclusions. The building of such a system would make the United States

less secure rather than more secure at present. Besides we need to stop this madness of nuclear race. As Albert Einstein best put it in 1946, “There is no defense in science against the weapon which can destroy civilization.”