

Shielded from Oversight

***The Disastrous US Approach
to Strategic Missile Defense***

<http://www.ucsusa.org/shieldedfromoversight>

Appendix 9: Quotes About the GMD
System's Effectiveness

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Below is a selected list of claims by U.S. officials about the effectiveness of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) throughout its evolution from 2000 to 2016, from the National Missile Defense (NMD) system under President Clinton through the Bush and Obama administrations.

(1) September 1, 2000: “... I simply cannot conclude, with the information I have today, that we have enough confidence in the technology and the operational effectiveness of the entire NMD system to move forward to deployment. Therefore, I have decided not to authorize deployment of a national missile defense at this time.”¹

— President Bill Clinton, speaking at Georgetown University

(2) March 18, 2003: “[E]ffectiveness is in the 90 percent range.”²

— Edward Aldridge, Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics

¹ Clinton, B. 2000. Transcript of President Clinton’s remarks on national security delivered at Georgetown University. *Arms Control Today*. September 1. Online at www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_09/clintonnmd.

² Aldridge, E. 2003. Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. March 18. Online at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-108shrg87323/pdf/CHRG-108shrg87323.pdf>. This contains the following exchange:

Senator BAYH. Let me ask you, Secretary Aldridge, about the effectiveness of the system that is to be deployed in 2004 and 2005 in protecting against this developing North Korean threat. The 10 land-based missiles proposed for the end of fiscal year 2004, how effective would they be against the North Korean missile, if it were in fact launched against our country?

Secretary ALDRIDGE. We think it would be effective. We probably should not go into a lot of details.

Senator BAYH. How do you define effective? 90 percent success rate? 75? 50?

Secretary ALDRIDGE. Yes, sir. The way you could achieve these rates is you do not have to fire just one interceptor per target. You could fire two, as we do in PAC-3.

Senator BAYH. Of course.

Secretary ALDRIDGE. The effectiveness is in the 90 percent range. Of course, we want the effectiveness to be high enough that we never have to use these things. I mean, that’s the ultimate effectiveness, that they never be used.

Senator BAYH. There are 10 going online in 2004, 10 in 2005?

Secretary ALDRIDGE. Right.

Senator BAYH. The radar is not going to be available. When will that go into place, 2006?

Secretary ALDRIDGE. Let me see. General Kadish probably has the specific dates for all of those.

General KADISH. We will have radars online to handle the early warning and usefulness of the system in 2004, when we put the missiles on alert, if everything works out all right. We’ll add the sea-based X-band, if it proves out, the following year. It’s currently scheduled by September 2005.

Senator BAYH. So, Secretary Aldridge, your testimony is that with the 10 interceptors going in at the end of fiscal year 2004 and the radar that will be online at that time, we would have a 90 percent effectiveness in shooting down the Taepo Dong II?

Secretary ALDRIDGE. A lot depends on the continuation of the test and the effectiveness, its precise effectiveness, numbers. But I would put, as of today, the projected effectiveness in the 90-percent range.

- (3) March 23, 2003: ***“There are a lot of things that go into [determining] effectiveness. Everybody can be right.”***³
 – Missile Defense Agency (MDA) Director Ronald T. Kadish, in response to a question from a reporter about Aldridge’s statement
- (4) July 21, 2005: ***“We have a better than zero chance of intercepting, I believe, an inbound warhead. That confidence will improve over time.”***⁴
 – MDA Director Lt. General Henry Obering
- (5) March 14, 2006: ***“When the president declares limited defensive operational capability, we are prepared as the shooter, if you will, to execute the mission to defend our country. And I’m very confident in the efficacy of that system.”***⁵
 – Admiral Timothy Keating, Commander of U.S. Northern Command
- (6) June 2006: ***“(From) what I have seen and what I know about the system and its capabilities I am very confident.”***⁶
 – MDA Director Lt. Gen. Henry A. Obering
- (7) July 6, 2006: ***“If it headed to the United States, we’ve got a missile defense system that will defend our country.”***⁷
 – President George W. Bush in response to a question on **Larry King Live** about North Korea’s unsuccessful test of a long-range ballistic missile the day before.
- (8) September 1, 2006: ***“I would say that if we had to use the system in an operational mode, it would be very capable.”***⁸
 – MDA Director Lt. Gen. Henry A. Obering
- (9) January 29, 2007: ***“We are Confident The Ballistic Missile Defense System Would Have Operated As Designed Had The Taepo Dong-2 Threatened The U.S.”***⁹
 – MDA Deputy Director Brigadier General Patrick O’Reilly
- (10) October 2, 2007: ***“...[D]oes the system work? The answer to that is yes. Is it going to work against more complex threats in the future? We believe it will...”***
 – MDA Director Lt. Gen. Henry A. Obering¹⁰
- (11) November 2, 2008: ***“I have very high confidence we could defend the United States against that threat.”***¹¹
 – MDA Director Lt. Gen. Henry A. Obering, about whether the system could shoot down one or two missiles launched from North Korea.

³ Barrett, R. 2003. Lawmakers question effectiveness of missile defense system. *Space News*, March 24, 6.

⁴ Tyson, A. 2005. U.S. missile defense being expanded, general says. *The Washington Post*, July 22, A10. Online at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/21/AR2005072102356.html.

⁵ Sherman, J. 2006. Experts question U.S. system’s ability to intercept North Korean missile. *Inside Missile Defense*, June 21.

⁶ Burns, R. 2006. Missile defense chief expresses confidence in ability to hit North Korean missile in flight. *Associated Press Worldstream*, June 23. Online at www.highbeam.com/doc/1P1-125585913.html.

⁷ CNN. 2006. Transcript of Larry King with President Bush, Laura Bush. CNN.com. July 6. Online at www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/07/06/transcript.bush/index.html?iref=newssearch.

⁸ Department of Defense. 2006. DoD news briefing with Lt. Gen. Obering from the Pentagon. September 1. Online at <http://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=3710>.

⁹ O’Reilly, P. 2007. Missile defense program overview for the Washington Roundtable on Science and Public Policy. Briefing slides. January 29. Slide 19. Online at <http://marshall.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/OReilly-Current-Status-and-Future-Developments-for-U.S.-Missile-Defense.pdf>.

¹⁰ Department of Defense. 2007. DoD news briefing with Gen. Renuart and Lt. Gen. Obering from the Pentagon, Arlington, Va. October 2. Online at <http://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=4046>.

¹¹ McIntyre, J. 2008. Obama to be told U.S. missile defense capable, general says. CNN. November 12. Online at www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/11/12/obama.missiles/index.html?iref=24hours.

(12) March 17, 2009: “*Senator, I’ll tell you, if we felt the North Koreans were going to shoot a ballistic missile at us today, I am comfortable that we would have an effective system able to meet that threat.*”¹²

– General Victor Renault, Commander U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Transportation Command

(13) June 9, 2009: “*I think that the judgement and advice I got was that the 30 silos that we have now or are under construction, are fully adequate to protect us against the North Korean threat for a number of years. ... I have confidence that if North Korea launched a long-range missile in the direction of the United States that we would have a high probability of being able to defend ourselves against it.*”¹³

– Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates

(14) June 16, 2009: Confidence that a North Korean missile could be shot down is: “*ninety percent, plus.*”¹⁴

– Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General James Cartwright

(15) July 28, 2009: “*Well, we have a very proven missile system in the area of missiles coming out of North Korea.*”¹⁵

– MDA Director Lt. Gen. Patrick O’Reilly

(16) April 21, 2010: “*It is the belief of the—of the leaders of this department that we have the capability to defend the United States against the—against an ICBM threat from a rogue nation such as Iran or North Korea. We are confident in the system that we have at this point.*”¹⁶

– Geoff Morrell, Pentagon Press Secretary

(17) December 1, 2010: “*... the probability will be well over in the high 90s today of the GMD system being able to intercept that today.*”¹⁷

– MDA Director Patrick O’Reilly in response to a question from Representative Trent Franks about countering “one ICBM coming from Tehran to New York.”

¹² Renault, V. 2009. Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. March 17. Online at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111shrg52620/pdf/CHRG-111shrg52620.pdf>.

¹³ Gates, R. 2009. Testimony before the Defense Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee. June 9. Online at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111shrg89104347/pdf/CHRG-111shrg89104347.pdf>.

¹⁴ Cartwright J. 2009. Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. June 16. Online at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111shrg52620/pdf/CHRG-111shrg52620.pdf>

Senator BAYH: I’ve bumped up against my time limit here, but there was one final question. Maybe you can give me a brief response.

You’re briefing the President of the United States. He has to take into consideration what you’re doing, in terms of facing these threats. He asks you, “If there is a rogue launch, what are the percentages that we’re going to be able to hit it and bring it down? What would you tell him?”

General CARTWRIGHT. Ninety-percent, plus.

Senator BAYH. Ninety-percent-plus confidence that we could—if there’s a rogue launch from North Korea, let’s say, we could intercept that target and bring it down?

General CARTWRIGHT. Yes. Sir.

¹⁵ Brennan, M. 2009. US missile defense director Patrick O’Reilly on Bloomberg TV. **Bloomberg TV**, July 28.

¹⁶ Department of Defense. 2010. DOD news briefing with Geoff Morrell from the Pentagon. News transcript. April 21. Online at <http://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=4612>.

¹⁷ O’Reilly, P. 2010. Testimony before the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee. December 1. Online at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111hrg65294/pdf/CHRG-111hrg65294.pdf>

(18) April 13, 2011: ***“The posture we have today is one that has us well-protected against the initial ICBMs that might be deployed by states like North Korea and Iran, that are few in number, relatively slow, and lack sophisticated countermeasures.”***¹⁸

— Bradley Roberts, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy.

(19) December 12, 2012: ***“I’m very confident that American defense capabilities are able, no problem, to block a rocket like this one.”***¹⁹

— U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, in response to a question from CNN on the capability of U.S. missile defenses, December 12, 2012.

(20) March 7, 2013: ***“I can tell you that the United States is fully capable of defending against any North Korean ballistic missile attack. And our recent success in returning to testing of the upgraded version of the so-called GBI, or the CE2 missile, will keep us on a good trajectory to improve our defense capability against limited ballistic missile threats such as those from North Korea. But let’s be clear, we are fully capable of dealing with that threat.”***²⁰

— White House Press Secretary Jay Carney, in response to a question at the White House Daily Press Briefing.

(21) March 15, 2013: ***“We have confidence in our system. And we certainly will not go forward with the additional 14 interceptors until we are sure that we have the complete confidence that we will need. But—but the American people should be assured that our interceptors are effective.”***²¹

— Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, in response to a question at a Pentagon press conference.

(22) April 9, 2013: ***“I believe we have a credible ability to defend the homeland, to defend Hawaii, defend Guam, to defend our forward-deployed forces and defend our allies.”***

— Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, in response to a question about intercepting North Korean missiles in a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.²²

¹⁸ Roberts, B. 2011. Testimony before the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee. April 13. Online at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-112shrg68090/pdf/CHRG-112shrg68090.pdf>. Roberts states: “Now, what does that mean? The posture we have today is one that has us well-protected against the initial ICBMs that might be deployed by states like North Korea and Iran, that are few in number, relatively slow, and lack sophisticated countermeasures. Against this threat we have the current posture of 30 GBIs and the expected enhancements to come in the defense of the Homeland with the future deployment in 2020 time frame of SM-3 2B.”

¹⁹ Klapper, B. 2012. US hesitant in condemning North Korean launch. *The Seattle Times*. December 12. Online at www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/us-hesitant-in-condemning-north-korean-launch/.

²⁰ White House, The. 2013. Press briefing by press secretary Jay Carney. March 7. Online at www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/03/07/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-372013.

²¹ Department of Defense. 2013. DOD news briefing on missile defense from the Pentagon. News transcript. March 15. Online at <http://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=5205>.

²² Locklear, S. 2013. Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. April 9. Online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/13-14%20-%204-9-13.pdf. Hearing includes this exchange:

Senator MCCAIN: Do you believe that we have the ability to intercept a missile if the North Koreans launch a missile, as is widely reported they would do in coming days?

Admiral LOCKLEAR: I believe we have a credible ability to defend the homeland, to defend Hawaii, defend Guam, to defend our forward-deployed forces and defend our allies.

Senator MCCAIN: Do we have the capability to intercept a missile if the North Koreans launch within the next several days?

Admiral LOCKLEAR: We do.

(23) May 9, 2013: ***“We do have confidence in the ability of the ballistic missile defense system to defend the United States against a limited attack from both North Korea and Iran today and in the near future.”***

— Lt. General Richard P. Formica, Commander of the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command, and Commander of the Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense, in response to a question from Senator Mark Udall about the capability of “our current GMD system to defend all of the United States, including the east coast, against current and near-term ballistic missile threats from both North Korea and Iran?”²³

(24) May 9, 2013: ***“The east coast is well protected as the result of—it was protected before the additional 14, and this additional 14 provides additional protection both for anything from North Korea as well as anything from Iran should that threat develop.”***

— Madelyn Creedon, Assistant Defense Secretary for Global Strategic Affairs, in response to a question from Senator Mark Udall (and referring to the recently announced plan to deploy 14 additional interceptors in Alaska).²⁴

(25) July 2013: ***“I stand by my response in the testimony I provided on May 9.”***

— Lt. General Richard Formica, Commander of the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, when asked about the effectiveness of the GMD System shortly after failure of the FTG-07 intercept test on July 5, 2013.²⁵

(26) July 9, 2013: ***“But we maintain that we have a robust missile defense system in place to defend the United States and our allies from a range of threats. ... We have a range of assets that can support American missile defense, and we are confident that we can defend this country from the missile threat.”***

— Pentagon Press Secretary George Little, four days after the failed FTG-07 intercept test of the GMD system.²⁶

(27) Sometime before August 21, 2013: ***“Of course you’re protected. Yes, you’re protected. We’re proud to protect you”***²⁷

— MDA Director Vice Admiral James Syring, in response to the question “Am I protected where I live?” asked by a person sitting next to him on an airplane.

(28) March 25, 2014: Regarding the GMD system: ***“We have confidence in the current capability. Do we need to do more? Do we need to continue to do the necessary testing? Yes. But we have confidence in the operational employment, the rules of engagement that we would use that would address maybe some reliability or some uncertainty associated with the system”***²⁸

— Lieutenant General David L. Mann, Commanding General U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Strategic Forces Command and Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense

²³ Formica, R. 2013. Testimony before Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services. U.S. Senate. May 9. Online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/13-40%20-%205-9-13.pdf.

²⁴ Creedon, M. 2013. Testimony before the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services. U.S. Senate. May 9. Online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/strategic_ballisticmissiledefensepolicies_050913.pdf.

²⁵ Sherman, J. 2013. Top army general still confident in GMD system despite intercept test failure. *Inside Defense SITREP*, July 10.

²⁶ Department of Defense. 2013. Department of Defense news briefing with George Little from the Pentagon. News transcript. July 9. Online at <http://archive.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5269>.

²⁷ Tolson, A. 2013. MDA director gives update on missile defense. *The Redstone Rocket*, August 21. Online at www.theredstonerocket.com/tech_today/article_351c1188-0a62-11e3-9771-0019bb2963f4.html.

²⁸ Mann, D. 2014. Testimony before the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services. U.S. House of Representatives. March 25. Online at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hrg87856/html/CHRG-113hrg87856.htm.

(29) March 25, 2014: ***“As a policy official who is often briefed by those who develop and operate the system, I am confident that the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system can defend the United States against a limited intercontinental ballistic missile attack.”***²⁹

– Elaine M. Bunn, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense for Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy

(30) March 19, 2015: Regarding the GMD system: ***“We have high confidence in the ability of this system to defeat an ICBM strike against the United States from an enemy with limited ICBM capabilities.”***³⁰

– Admiral William E. Gortney, Commander North American Aerospace Command and U.S. Northern Command

(31) March 25, 2015: Regarding the GMD system: ***“As the Secretary of Defense and various Combatant Commanders have previously testified, the Warfighter remains confident in our ability to protect the Nation against a limited intercontinental ballistic missile attack, even in the face of the changing fiscal environment.”***³¹

– Lieutenant General David L. Mann, Commanding General, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Strategic Forces Command and Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense

(32) October 7, 2015: Speaking about the North Korean ICBM threat to the U.S. homeland: ***“We’re ready for him, and we’re ready 24 hours a day if he should be dumb enough to shoot something at us.”***³²

– Admiral Bill [William E.] Gortney, Commander North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, at an Atlantic Council event.

(33) April 13, 2016: In response to a question about missile defense coverage of Hawaii: ***“The people of Hawaii are protected today from the North Korean threat.”***³³

– MDA Director Vice Admiral James D. Syring

(34) April 13, 2016: ***“The U.S. homeland is currently protected against potential ICBM attacks from States like North Korea and Iran if it was to develop an ICBM in the future.”***³⁴

– Brian P. McKeon, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

(35) April 14, 2016: In response to a question about the GMD system’s coverage of Hawaii: ***“We’re prepared to engage and protect Hawaii, Alaska and the rest of the states with the existing system and have high confidence in its success.”***³⁵

– Admiral Bill [William E.] Gortney, Commander North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command

²⁹ Bunn, E. 2014. Testimony before the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services. U.S. House of Representatives. March 25. Online at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg87856/html/CHRG-113hhrg87856.htm.

³⁰ Gortney, W. 2015. Statement before the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services. March 19. Online at <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS29/20150319/103007/HHRG-114-AS29-Wstate-GortneyUSNB-20150319.pdf>.

³¹ Mann, D. 2015. Statement before the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services. U.S. Senate. March 25. Online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Mann_03-25-15.pdf.

³² Shalal, A. 2015. U.S. says ready to defend against North Korean nuclear threat. *Reuters*. October 7. Online at www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-north-korea-arms-idUSKCN0S207L20151008.

³³ Syring, J. 2016. Testimony before the Subcommittee on Defense of the Committee on Appropriations. U.S. Senate. April 13. Online at <http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings/hearing-on-the-fy2017-missile-defense-agency-budget-request>.

³⁴ McKeon, B. 2016. Statement before the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services. U.S. Senate. April 13. Online at www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/McKeon_04-13-16.pdf.

³⁵ Gortney, B. 2016. Testimony before the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services. U.S. House of Representatives. April 14.