

NO
TO MISSILE DEFENCE

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MDWG
MISSILE DEFENCE WORKING GROUP

Introduction

The United States is building a system to shoot down long-range missiles. Despite being the greatest military power in the world with a large arsenal of nuclear weapons, the US insists that it will be threatened if countries beyond its influence – especially Iran, Iraq and North Korea – get nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and long-range missiles. But rather than building trust through diplomacy and achieving disarmament through international agreements, the US wants to keep its own nuclear weapons and build a system theoretically to defend against other States' weapons.

A US missile defence system would:

Almost certainly involve putting weapons in space for the first time

Cost hundreds of billions of dollars that could be better spent on real security measures

Make use of secretive US bases in the UK

Through our involvement, make the UK a potential target for a terrorist attack

Undermine efforts for international disarmament and diplomacy

Provoke an increase in nuclear arsenals, chemical and biological weapons

'We're going to fight a war in space. We're going to fight from space and we're going to fight into space.'

General Joseph W Ashy, Commander-in-Chief, US Space Command (CINCSPACE), 5 August 1996E), 5 August 1996

UK Involvement

The US wants to use radar stations in Europe and elsewhere, including the US bases at Fylingdales and Menwith Hill in Yorkshire. Whilst both are nominally RAF bases, Menwith Hill is controlled by the US National Security Agency and it is not clear what control the UK has over Fylingdales although it is staffed by UK personnel.

The UK Government appears reluctant to deny the US and, instead, seems inclined to favour the use of bases here in the system. It has now received a formal request from the US to upgrade Fylingdales, which the Secretary for Defence announced to Parliament on 17th December 2002.

The best way to achieve peace is to tackle threats at their source through diplomacy and international disarmament. As this briefing shows, a US missile defence system will undermine both.

“If you look at world history, ... there’s a permanent race between sword and shield. The sword always wins.”

French President Jacques Chirac

‘Star Wars’: turning fiction into fact!

US missile defence ambitions include putting weapons in space; for example high energy lasers are now being developed to intercept missiles in space. This may take some time but the US is intent on weaponising the ‘final frontier’ not only to protect against missiles but to control space and earth below. This means deploying both defensive and offensive weapons, which could trigger an arms race in space.

According to the US Space Command, the goals of missile ‘defences’ include helping to achieve ‘full spectrum dominance’, which means supremacy in all fields of warfare – land, sea, air, space and information, thereby, protecting US military and economic interests. It is not surprising that other countries see US missile defences as part of a strategy for global control and not as a defence system at all.

This poses a real risk to the world. We must prevent weapons being put into space and space wars.

‘It is substantially easier and cheaper to deploy simple and effective countermeasures against missile defenses than it is for the defense to respond to them.’

Stephen W Young, *Pushing the Limits* (Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers, Washington, 2000) p. 15.

The UK as a target for attack

UK involvement in US missile defences is also a potential threat to our security. Any attempt by an armed group or state to thwart the system could involve a strike on the bases at Menwith Hill and Fylingdales. It appears that the Government has given little consideration to the impact on the local population of such an attack, particularly if it involved a nuclear, biological or chemical weapon.

The risk of more weapons

It is likely that this system will over the long-term lead to an increase of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. States, which feel threatened by the military imbalance that Missile Defence creates, will respond by developing more, and more sophisticated weapons.

'Magic technological fixes for complex strategic problems are seductive, but impregnable defences can prove as flawed as the Maginot Line.'

Malcolm Savidge MP, Chair, All-Party Group on Global Security

Bad value for people

Over \$100 billion has been spent already on Missile Defences and estimates exist of over \$200 billion up to 2025 - a misuse, on a vast scale, of money that could be better spent on alleviating poverty, inequality and environmental degradation, three major causes of global insecurity.

Full participation of Britain in the system would reportedly cost up to £10 billion. This money could be used for overseas development assistance and conflict prevention as well as on improving our hospitals, schools and transport.

The arms industry, which gave hundreds of millions of dollars to George W Bush's election campaign, now sees much to gain from the missile defence project. UK arms companies are just as keen to get lucrative work in this area – but at whose expense?

Bad for the planet

An upgrade at Fylingdales could involve the construction of a powerful X-band radar and already local residents are worried about the health effects.

An intercepted missile during the boost phase could fall short of its intended target. Contamination from a nuclear, biological or chemical warhead that broke up on impact would badly contaminate the land, posing lethal risks for the local population and environment.

An investigation into the impact of fall-out from interception for the UK population and others including the emergency and medical response is vital before any decision is made about UK involvement in the system.

'Of necessity, our efforts will begin relatively small, but will grow significantly in pace and intensity.' US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Quadrennial Defense

For further reading and more information on this issue:

Missile Defence Agency www.acq.osd.mil/bmdo/

Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space

www.spaceforpeace.org

The British American Security Information Council (BASIC) produces a monthly e-mail Missile Defence update www.basicint.org

Union of Concerned Scientists www.ucsusa.org

Yorkshire CND briefing papers: 'What goes on at Menwith Hill' and 'The UK and Star Wars' are available

US Strategic Command www.spacecom.mil/

Groups supporting this leaflet do not necessarily endorse the above external links.

This leaflet has been produced on behalf of the Missile Defense Working Group (MDWG) which includes the following organisations:

Northern Friends Peace Board www.nfpb.gn.apc.org/ Tel. 01204 382330

Scientists for Global Responsibility www.sgr.org.uk Tel. 07771 883 696

Medact www.medact.org Tel. 0207 272 2020

Quaker Peace and Social Witness www.quaker.org.uk/peace/disarm.html

Tel. 0207 663 1067

United Nations Association-UK www.una-uk.org Tel. 0207 930 2931

Yorkshire CND www.cndyorks.gn.apc.org Tel. 01274 730795

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament www.cnduk.org Tel. 020 7700 2393

Campaign Against the Arms Trade www.caat.org.uk Tel. 0207 281 0291

Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases www.caab.org.uk

Tel. 01943 466405

Please contact any member of the MDWG for more copies or to discuss further any of the concerns raised here.

Take Action - What you can do

The UK Government has received a formal request to use Fylingdales as part of US Missile Defence. It is vital now that before any decision is made the Government holds a fully open and informed public and Parliamentary debate.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) recently published a discussion paper and is inviting comments. It is important to:

Comment as individuals and as groups to the MoD directly:

Policy Director, Ministry of Defence, Metropole Building, Whitehall, London WC2N 5BL,
or by email to: Missile-Defense@mod.gsi.gov.uk

You can also download the discussion paper from
www.mod.uk/linked_files/issues/missiledefense/missiledef.pdf

Write to your MP asking him or her to raise your concerns with the Secretary of Defence, Geoff Hoon MP. Ask them to urge the Government to publish the findings of the debate. At the moment it is very vague; what will the government be doing with responses to its discussion paper and when?

Developments are moving quickly so it is important to respond as soon as possible, but also to continue to raise your concerns.

Other ideas

Attend **peaceful protests** at US bases.

Raise concern in **local media**, especially if there is a local connection or if the issues have been in the national news at the time. Write to your local paper and use radio phone-ins.

Raise these issues with other **individuals and groups**; photocopy this paper or get more from the groups listed below.

Write to The US Ambassador: William Farish, US Ambassador, USA Embassy, 24 Grosvenor Square, W1A 1AE and fax 0207 493 3425

Some useful tips when writing to your MP:

Keep it short and to the point.

Make it clear that you're writing in a personal capacity as a constituent.

Ask questions that you would like your MP to follow up as well as telling them what you think.

Give them information they may not be aware of: don't assume they know everything.

Consider following up your letter with a meeting. But remember; prepare for this with more information.

We owe it to future generations to become informed about what might be done in our name.