

# The Case Against Ballistic Missile Defense

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## Creating Instability

Most opponents of BMD believe the program will only create instability, and charge that it could trigger an arms race. The United Nations recently table a resolution expressing its concern that BMD could have a negative impact on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament efforts and lead to an arms race in space.

Most often, analysts skeptical of the BMD fear that the program could trigger an arms race with China. Although not actively hostile to the United States, China has begun developing BMD countermeasures allowing its missiles to penetrate missile defenses such as the American system. China also plans to increase its quantity of ICBMs capable of reaching the United States.

The Lui Institute for Global Studies, headed by former Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy released a comprehensive report written by Ernie Regehr last December studying the Ballistic Missile Defense program. The report suggests it is unlikely that North Korea or Iran will achieve the capability to strike the United States in the near future. The report also suggests that the implementation of BMD will decrease the probability that a diplomatic solution could be reached between the United States and these countries, as the program will only increase hostility between the countries. The report also suggests that as a result of BMD, these 'rouge' states will be more determined than ever to

develop their ICBM programs to the extent that they could be capable of striking the US.

Opponents state that it is foolish to provoke such action, especially with a defensive system that may not even work - it should be noted that despite improvement, not all of the recent tests have been successful.

Regehr is concerned that BMD could easily stray from its officially intended purpose of a defensive weapon. His report suggests that the BMD system could also duplicate as an anti-satellite offensive weapons system. Additionally, this capability may be enhanced if the United States is able to design a successful space-based anti-missile program. Currently the US government aims

to start testing space weapons in 2008. These concerns lead to speculation by opponents of BMD that perhaps the American government has an ulterior motive.

Opponents view BMD as an attempt by the American government to create what many call a 'Pax Americana' (American Peace) - a peace 'enforced on the world by American weapons of war', as described by former President John F. Kennedy, who publicly spoke against such a peace in the months before his assassination in 1963. Many would argue this type of peace

would not be permanent, that American domination would eventually infuriate some countries frustrated with American dominance and initiate a drive to challenge the United States. Thus, the system may initially create stability, but in the long run would create a global environment of increased instability.

## Canadian Participation

Much of the Canadian public is unsure about our country's participation in the American BMD program. The Council of Canadians points out that in a recent poll conducted by Ipsos-Reid, 69% of Canadians are against Canadian participation in Ballistic Missile Defense, although this number could be bloated because

of additional information in the question concerning possible American missile launchers located in Canada, which is pure speculation.

The Canadian government bases its willingness to participate in BMD on the defense that Canada must have control over what goes on over Canadian airspace. However, many are skeptical about the amount of control Canada would actually have in an emergency. The argument suggests that even though Canada may be at the table with the US, the Canadian delegates would be

there simply to hear what the Americans intended to do without having Canada's concerns taken seriously.

The report by Regehr asserts that the United States Missile Defense Agency, despite the cost, plans to deploy a 'weapons test bed' in outer space by 2008. Regehr asserts that if the Canadian government is serious about its opposition to the weaponization of space, it should call on the US government to agree to the Geneva Conference on Disarmament which intends to lead to a ban of space-based weapons.

In the political arena, the NDP leads the charge against BMD, claiming the program is contrary to Canadian values promoting peace and co-operation, diminishes Canadian sovereignty and, increases American control over Canadian affairs. They declare that the NDP is the only choice in the next election for those seeking to ensure Canada stays out of the agreement.

Former Liberal Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy is weary of BMD and believes the Martin government may be unnecessarily rushing a decision on Canadian participation. "The conventional wisdom is that Canada is facing an immediate decision and must be at the BMD table with the Americans to have any input into its future implementation," says Axworthy. "In fact, there is no such pressure. The BMD system is still experimental and the Americans are not ready for a Canadian decision."

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