

Western European Union ends silence on missile defense

by Dean Andromidas and Michael Liebig

The Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU) held a symposium on "Anti-Ballistic Missile Defense for Western Europe" in Rome on April 21-22. Irrespective of the specific views expressed concerning European ballistic missile defense, the very fact that a high-level conference took place on that subject is remarkable. Since approximately 1985-86, ballistic missile defense (BMD) had been a non-issue among Europe's defense officialdom. The U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative had faded away in western Europe's strategic perception, just as the U.S.-European SDI-cooperation agreements vanished into oblivion. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, successive nuclear disarmament agreements, and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact seemed to have rendered ballistic missile defense superfluous. The use of ballistic missiles during the 1991 Persian Gulf war did not trigger a serious BMD debate in Europe. The 1987 agreement on the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) seemed much more "practical" than "futuristic Star Wars technologies" for BMD.

The WEU comprises Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Although overshadowed by the European Community and NATO, it nonetheless has taken on a more active role in West European security policy since 1989. The Rome symposium on BMD was largely the result of the work of the Technological and Aerospace Committee of the WEU Assembly of parliamentarians from member countries.

On Nov. 6, 1992, a report, titled "Anti-Ballistic Missile Defense," was submitted by that committee. Written by German Bundestag member Christian Lenzer, it stressed that "the first aim of this report was to draw the attention of the WEU Council and the public to a problem of a new kind . . .

and to open a more in-depth debate on the subject." The main points in the report are:

- the proliferation of ballistic missile capabilities is still increasing;
- there are limits to political and diplomatic means of blocking ballistic missile proliferation;
- there must be an exact assessment of "the ballistic risk to Europe" and the consequences to be drawn from it;
- Europe must avoid being presented with a *fait accompli* in the BMD field by "the United States—perhaps together with Russia." This concerns especially the American "GPALS" and Russian "GPS" programs for limited BMD.

On the question of potential threats, the report refers to the most fragile security situation in the successor states of the former Soviet Union: "It should not be forgotten that there are still many intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) held by countries on the territory of the former Soviet Union where the political situation is still unsettled. The proliferation of such systems might therefore be a danger for Europe, particularly as it is technically possible to modify the range of intercontinental missiles and use them as shorter range missiles." The possible loss of control over some nuclear warheads must be added to that threat potential.

Furthermore, ballistic missile technologies are readily accessible to a growing number of states, whose present or future governments may be incalculable in their behavior. Twenty-six states will have ballistic missile capabilities with ranges up to 1,000 kilometers by the year 2000. Nine states outside NATO and the former Warsaw Pact will have ballistic missiles with ranges from 3-5,000 km. Besides nuclear weapons proliferation, 30 states outside NATO and the former Warsaw Pact will possess chemical weapons by the year

2000. China and North Korea are now the principal international suppliers of Scud-B derivatives and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs). Outside the successor states of the former Soviet Union, the following states in the geographical vicinity of western Europe have ballistic missile capabilities: Libya, Egypt, Algeria, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, and Israel. The range of Scud-B derivatives, if launched from the southern Mediterranean, covers Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Two Libyan Scud-Bs were fired at the Italian island of Lampedusa in 1986, although they did no damage.

If launched from Serbia, Scud-B derivatives could cover the whole of the Balkans, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Italy, as well as parts of the Czech Republic, Germany, and Switzerland. A most significant contribution at the Rome symposium came from Andrea Nativi, editor of the official publication of Italy's Defense Ministry, who said, "Some Scud-Bs were sold and transferred from eastern Europe to Serbia, a development whose consequences need no further explanation." The Serbian drive to acquire ballistic missiles has been known for some time in European defense circles, but so far, the matter was systematically kept out of the public domain. Supposedly, the news about the Serbian missile threat would result in a grave psychological destabilization of the populations of western Europe, which categorically had to be avoided.

Dealing with the 'ballistic risk' outside BMD

The conference reviewed several avenues of deterrence and defense against ballistic missiles threatening Europe. One avenue is the enforcement of treaties and conventions such as the MTCR, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the international treaty banning chemical weapons. While this approach on proliferation was generally endorsed, a growing disillusion about its effectiveness seems to have set in. Hartmut Soell, president of the WEU Assembly, in his opening address, spoke about "proliferation throughout the world of ballistic systems and weapons of mass destruction against which the treaties now seem to be nothing more than paper barriers." There was also much skepticism expressed concerning diplomatic arrangements for restrictions on the transfer of "dual-use" technologies to Third World countries. "Dual-use" restrictions cut deep into Europe's technological and economic flesh, because of the continent's dependence on high-technology export markets.

A second avenue focuses on "offensive and preemptive military and paramilitary means" against ballistic missile and nuclear proliferation. This means air and/or missile strikes against missile ramps, warehouses, and production and assembly plants. The often-cited example of this approach is Israel, with its 1981 destruction of Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor. But it was also pointed out, that during the Gulf war it proved extremely difficult for the United States to destroy Iraq's dispersed, mobile missile ramps. Equally difficult is

the destruction of reinforced bunkers, underground facilities, and sites which are heavily defended by air defense systems. This second approach was particularly emphasized by representatives from Britain and France.

The representatives of the two European nuclear powers, Britain and France, seem to envisage a combination of "pre-emptive military and paramilitary action" with the strategic effect of "nuclear deterrence" to enforce non-proliferation. Much of the diversity, if not friction among European states over the BMD question seems to stem from the different strategic interests deriving from their nuclear or non-nuclear status. Britain and France's supreme concern is upholding the "deterrence value" of their national nuclear forces.

The Anglo-French nuclear forces

There is an underlying anxiety in the political and military establishments of France and Britain that BMD threatens their national nuclear ballistic missile forces. The nuclear power status defines very much the international standing of the two countries. Both France and Britain have made enormous investments in their nuclear ballistic missile forces. French President François Mitterrand so far has been categorically hostile to BMD. The British governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major were always ambiguous, at least in terms of diplomacy. With the ballistic missile threat getting increasingly dangerous for all of Europe, including France and Britain, their attitude seems to be relaxing. Now there seems to be conditional backing for European BMD. The categorical condition remains, that the strategic hegemony of their nuclear ballistic missile forces remain unchallenged. France and Britain therefore are trying to shape any European BMD approach in a way that remains subordinated to the continued credibility of nuclear deterrence.

At the Rome conference there was no indication that the German government has any defined position on European BMD. A German position would have to reflect the strategic aims of a European BMD for those states which have no national nuclear forces.

The subordinated and limited character of the present European BMD approaches expresses itself both strategically and technologically. Strategically, European BMD is almost axiomatically defined as limited capability. Technologically, there is an exclusive fixation on kinetic energy BMD systems, that is anti-missile missiles, as typified by the Gulf war's Patriot versus Scud missiles. Paradoxically, many representatives at the Rome conference pointed to the rather miserable battle performance of the Patriot system against the not-very-sophisticated Scuds of Iraq.

GPALS and European BMD

In terms of the basic strategic and technological parameters, the present shape of European BMD efforts, as discussed in Rome, is very similar to the American Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS) approach. After 1988,

then-President George Bush redirected the SDI program away from technologies based on new physical principles. Instead, the "Bush SDI" almost exclusively focused on kinetic energy systems or anti-missile missiles. Bush was determined to bury Reagan's original beam-weapon SDI project to transcend nuclear Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). Bush was committed to blocking the technological and strategic attrition of nuclear deterrence through beam-weapon BMD. Thus the SDI was given only a subordinated, limited, and "complementary" role, which is what GPALS is all about

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(see *EIR*, March 22, 1991, p. 20). The American SDI Office, which was to have sent two officials, cancelled their engagement in Rome. Outside of one academic who had been an adviser to the Bush administration, the United States was represented only by High Frontier's Danny Graham.

In spite of the conceptual similarity between present U.S. and European BMD approaches, European suspicions emerged at the Rome symposium concerning GPALS. It was pointed out that the stated intention of the program, to "protect the United States' friends and allies," somehow contradicts the limited capacity of the system. Privately, it was said that GPALS at best might be able to protect U.S. military forces deployed outside the United States. The architecture of GPALS inherently excludes basic European security needs. In this context it was emphasized that a potential missile threat against Europe may not be directed primarily against military targets, but against population centers. The targeting of cities with limited offensive missile capabilities gives a much higher psycho-strategic "value" than an attempt to cripple the military forces of European states with attacking missiles.

The suspicions toward the United States on BMD were naturally also connected with the traumatic experience of the U.S.-European SDI cooperation during the 1980s. Unlike U.S. cooperation with Israel, the agreements with Germany, Italy, and even Britain led nowhere. Another area of U.S.-European friction in the BMD realm is space-based intelligence assets. At the Rome conference there was unanimity concerning the urgent need for an independent European

reconnaissance satellite capacity, which would allow identification and assessment of ballistic missile threats.

The Italo-French SAMP-T program

The axiom that any European BMD approach should be subordinated to the continued hegemony of Franco-British nuclear deterrence expressed itself in the concrete proposals for European BMD systems. The most "advanced" such system presented at the Rome conference was the Franco-Italian program for a Surface-to-Air Medium-Range Ground-Based System (SAMP-T). The "Eurosam" program combines France's Thomson CSF, Aérospatiale, and Italy's Alenia. Eurosam proposes a system that would involve satellite-borne sensors and command and control facilities, linked with a network of ground-based radars and anti-missile missiles. The SAMP-T system would be a low-endoatmospheric (5-25 km) defense against attacking missiles of a 1,000-km range. It would allow point defense of specific sites or limited areas of maximum 30-km diameter. The next project proposed by Eurosam would be high-endoatmospheric (15-40 km) defense system against missiles with 3,000-km range defending an area with a 100-km diameter. The initial cost for a limited deployment of the SAMP-T system in France would be approximately \$10 billion. A fuller defense coverage of Europe based on such kinetic systems would be technically unfeasible and astronomically expensive.

Russian intervention in Rome

In view of the inherent technological and strategic constraints of any kinetic energy, anti-missile missile system, the presentation of Dr. Leonid Fituni, director of the Center for Global and Strategic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, was most extraordinary. Fituni was the only one on the conference panel to introduce beam-weapon, directed-energy technologies into the BMD debate. He did so by restating the Russian proposal to the United States for the joint development of a "plasma weapon" for the destruction of ballistic missiles "using Russian microwave and optic plasma generators and systems." The proposal was made at the April 4-5 Yeltsin-Clinton summit in Vancouver and first publicized in *Izvestia* on April 2. Besides a question from *EIR* representatives, no one present at the Rome conference even attempted to take on the issue presented by Dr. Fituni.

It was truly a historical paradox that at the Rome conference, a Russian scientist would point out the scientific-technological field in which the actual potential for BMD lies. Speed of light and energy densities of beam-weapon BMD make it the only approach which is inherently superior to any form of ballistic missile threat. In 1983, Lyndon LaRouche, the conceptual architect of Reagan's SDI, spoke at an *EIR* conference in Rome on "Beam Weapons—The Strategic Implications for Western Europe," which discussed how the American SDI should be complemented with ground-based and airborne directed-energy BMD in Europe. Then, in

1983, *Izvestia* covered the *EIR* conference, denouncing it as a “witches’ sabbath” of “war-mongers” headed by the “troglodyte” LaRouche.

The 1985 LaRouche SDI/TDI package

Between 1983 and 1985, associates of LaRouche in Europe elaborated the design for a European Tactical Defense Initiative (TDI), complementary to the SDI, against tactical and intermediate-range nuclear threats. Obviously, the political and military-strategic features of the missile threat against western Europe have changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. But, as the WEU Rome conference demonstrated, the ballistic missile threat as such is very real for Europe. Therefore, the key aspects of the LaRouche TDI/SDI package remain fully valid. They provide today a far better direction for the architecture of a European ballistic missile defense system than the mainstream proposals put forward at the WEU Rome conference.

Once the inherent limits of any kinetic energy BMD are grasped, the prime focus for a European BMD program has to be technologies “based on new physical principles.” Europe does presently possess a significant scientific research potential in the directed-energy field. But almost any technological realization of promising research work has so far been blocked for political, strategic, and budgetary reasons.

The Russian beam-weapon cooperation proposal has created a qualitatively new situation. Russia has opened up a scientific-technological area in which it is indeed the world leader. The Russian proposal is primarily directed toward the United States, with its vast scientific-technological potential in the BMD field, irrespective of the watering down of the original SDI design. But Russia has signalled that it is ready for technology sharing in the BMD field with Europe as well. It depends on Europe, and in particular Germany, to respond boldly to the extraordinary Russian offer.

Once the priority has been given to directed-energy systems for European BMD, existing kinetic energy systems of the improved Patriot type and those under development, like the Italo-French SAMP-T, the American THAAD or Erint, the Israeli Arrow, or the Russian S-300, could play a near-term transitional role. They would be the starting point—Mark 0 or Mark 1—for a rapidly evolving Mark 2 . . . Mark 3 . . . Mark N beam-weapon BMD system for Europe.

The parameters for a European BMD system

The 1985 LaRouche TDI package foresaw the following endoatmospheric BMD architecture for Europe:

- airborne high-performance lasers with ranges of several hundreds of kilometers;
- ground-based systems near borders with medium ranges (10-100 km);
- mobile systems with several tens of kilometers range for point defense.

The scientific-technological requirements of endoat-

mospheric BMD for Europe identified the following chief areas for research and development:

- Propagation of laser and particle beams in the atmosphere, particularly in the lower levels of the atmosphere. Complex problems arise here, different from those posed by exoatmospheric beam systems, such as optical phase conjugation applications and adaptive optics.
- Primary beam generation development. Emphasis should be on development of compact lasers in the multi-megawatt range, for installation on land, sea, and airborne vehicles; high-power tunable lasers for all-weather capability (free electron laser, frequency-shifting devices, etc.).
- Development of ultra-high-velocity projectile accelerators for endoatmospheric applications, in particular of magnetic rail-gun technology, for anti-missile, anti-aircraft, and anti-tank weapon applications;
- Development of compact pulsed-power sources;
- Development of stabilized platforms, pointing systems, optics, and power supplies for mobile basing of directed-energy weapons;
- Acceleration of European development of satellite and aircraft-based remote sensing systems for surveillance.

In order to achieve a European directed-energy BMD system, the following approach was recommended:

- The pooling of the scientific-technical personnel and material resources of participating European states. The working principle should be that of a “crash program,” like the U.S. Apollo program of the 1960s. The program should be led by a small, general staff-like group of statesmen, military, scientific, and technical experts from participating countries, avoiding bureaucratic structures at all costs.
- Instead of focusing on the ultimate perfection of one type of system, the program should evolve in the abovementioned “Mark 1 to Mark N” mode.
- A European program should work closely with the U.S. and Russian BMD programs, aiming at maximum scientific-technological “cross-fertilization.”
- The financing of a European BMD effort is to occur outside of regular governments’ budgets, i.e., “off budget.” Long-term, low-interest credit should be extended by state-controlled financial institutions. Such an approach is economically justified by the technological “spinoffs” of beam-weapon development, which raise the productivity level of the overall economy and increase the number of high-skilled jobs with correspondingly increased tax revenues.
- The Russian offer for East-West BMD cooperation opens the way for a solution to the proliferation question. With the ability to effectively defend against ballistic missiles, the incentive vanishes for developing sector nations to acquire ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction. Ultimately, Third World nations should join in the BMD effort. In fact, countries such as India, with its large industrial and world class scientific and engineering base, could not only profit, but make significant contributions.