

Europe/U.S. BMD: 'The Worst of Both Worlds'

Every review carried out recently by respected and competent U.S. military, scientific, and strategic analysts of the Obama Administration's Europe-based "Phased Adaptive Approach" (PAA) missile defense program has confirmed what critics have been warning for years: that it will not work, and that it will be a strategic threat to Russia.

The highly respected Defense Science Board completed a report during the second half of last year, concluding that critical technology problems and cost overruns make the goal of intercepting ballistic missiles early in flight unrealistic. The Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) office has never demonstrated that its sensor and radar systems can distinguish between decoys, missile parts, and real warheads, the report states. In wartime, if the system fired its limited number of interceptors at debris or decoys, when the real missiles hit, the result would be "dramatic and devastating."

On April 20, the U.S. General Accountability Office, tasked by Congress to produce an annual evaluation of the BMD office's progress, concluded that under the political pressure to deploy something quickly, the office is deploying systems before they are tested and ready. The manufacturing and production of interceptors already has had to be suspended, while failure review boards figure out why they don't

work. The program is behind schedule, over budget, and flawed.

And on May 8, Associated Press obtained a letter concerning a nearly completed study of the PAA approach by the National Academy of Sciences, again pointing to the inability of the system to discriminate between warheads and decoys. The Academy recommends *entirely scrapping* Phase IV of the proposed system—which is based on interceptors at velocities that physicists have shown *could* threaten Russia's ICBMs—because it won't work.

The danger is that the proposed system will not protect the United States and its allies, while, at the same time, it poses a potential threat to Russia. Dr. Ted Postol from MIT pointed out on May 19, just before the NATO summit in Chicago, that the paradox of the situation "is that even when they don't work, potential adversaries will treat them as if they do. Thus producing the worst of both worlds—no defense, but build-ups of offensive weapons to deal with those defenses."

As if to underscore that point, less than a week later, Russia carried out a test of what *Russia Today* described as a "top secret advanced intercontinental ballistic missile. It is designed to counter the American anti-missile shield currently being deployed..." The missile uses a new, improved solid propellant, for a faster boost. This provides little time for it to be intercepted before it releases multiple warheads. Each warhead will have improved maneuvering and targeting capabilities, so rather than following a simple ballistic trajectory, it will be unpredictable.

—Marsha Freeman