



Missile Defence

Memorandum from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament to the House of Commons Defence Committee

1. “The Government will agree to a US request for the use of UK facilities for missile defence only if we believe that doing so enhances the security of the UK and the NATO alliance. In this, the key point must be that the UK and other countries need to address the ballistic missile threat from certain states of concern. The principal driver of this potential threat to the UK is not the deployment of missile defences, or the use of UK facilities as part of a US system, but the ability of states of concern to succeed in flouting the international non-proliferation framework by developing or acquiring weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.”

2. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament believes that US use of UK facilities at Menwith Hill and Fylingdales as part of the proposed US missile defence system can only decrease security of the UK and its NATO allies.

3. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) discussion paper on Missile Defence, published in December 2002 fails to answer key questions about UK participation in the US missile defence programme such as the cost of participation and does not adequately address the problems caused by missile defence such as the risk of the UK becoming a target and the increased risk of proliferation.

4. The Government’s assertion that missile defence can operate alongside non-proliferation and diplomacy as part of a ‘comprehensive strategy’ for responding to the threat of missile proliferation is misguided. US proposals for missile defence are counterproductive to non-proliferation: they increase the risk of nuclear proliferation and undermine international arms control efforts and diplomacy.

5. The most effective way to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is by strengthening international non-proliferation and disarmament agreements, not by developing expensive and technologically questionable missile defence programmes.

6. The UK Government should refuse to allow US use of UK facilities for missile defence purposes and instead pursue further progress on disarmament of

nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles.

Assessing the missile threat

7. Any potential missile threat to the UK must be viewed in the context of the overall security threats that we face in the 21st century. These include many issues such as climate change, poverty, disease, social injustices in addition to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles.

8. The unilateralist policies of the current US administration are a major obstacle to tackling many of these problems. In recent years the US has obstructed, undermined or refused to participate in key international agreements supported by the UK such as the Kyoto Agreement, the protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention, the International Criminal Court, the Mine Ban Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

9. The MoD discussion paper argues that threat is based on ‘capability and intention’. It highlights four states as posing a potential missile threat: North Korea, Iran, Iraq and Libya. However, missile threats are a long term problem and intentions change. Only 15 years ago, the Soviet Union was seen as the major threat to NATO and Iraq was backed by the West in its war with Iran.

10. Current partial approaches to tackling missile proliferation are inadequate. A more comprehensive approach is needed, based on disarmament and prohibition of ballistic missiles, and which addresses not just current ‘rogue states’ but all states with ballistic missiles. Missile proliferation must be addressed multilaterally and by diplomacy.

Missile Defence makes the UK a target

11. The use of Fylingdales and Menwith Hill as the eyes of the US missile defence system makes the UK a target for any adversary seeking to overcome the system. As the Ministry of Defence (MoD) notes, during the Cold War military strategists speculated that the Soviet Union might prepare for nuclear attack by “first launching an attack to ‘blind’ the West by destroying the Early Warning Radar system.”

12. The MoD claims that Fylingdales is “not a plausible target” as attacking the base “could be contemplated only by a power with an extensive and highly sophisticated ballistic missile capability.” However, as the attacks on September 11 indicated, ballistic missiles are not the only plausible ways of hitting military or civilian installations.

As Sir Timothy Garden writes, “The upgraded X-band radar sites would become the forward eyes of a defence system. They would therefore become the priority targets for any enemy that wished to strike the US with ballistic missiles. An attack on these sites would not necessarily be carried out by ballistic missile.”

Missile Defence is triggering a new nuclear arms race

13. According to the MoD, missile defence is a “response to, not the cause of” proliferation. The MoD public discussion paper on missile defence states that China has been pursuing a nuclear modernization programme for some years “irrespective” of US proposals for missile defence. Nonetheless missile defence is a significant driver for nuclear proliferation especially in the Far East and South Asia.

14. Whilst China has sought to develop its nuclear forces for some time, its pursuit of multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRV) technology and its planned increases in nuclear warhead numbers are clearly designed with the objective of being able to overcome a US missile defence system. Although the MoD notes that the US continues to “engage constructively” with China, the US military views China as a “country that could be involved in an immediate or potential contingency” and is increasing its capacity for long range power projection towards the Far East.

15. Chinese modernization of nuclear forces also encourages India to increase its nuclear capability, further exacerbating the dangerous stand off in South Asia. The possibility that countries such as Japan and South Korea may in future be covered by US missile defences also provides an incentive to North Korea to develop its nuclear and missile capabilities further.

16. As French President Jacques Chirac described it, “If you look at world history, ever since men began waging war, you will see that there’s a permanent race between sword and shield. The sword always wins. The more improvements that are made to the shield, the more improvements are made to the sword. We think that with these systems, we are just going to spur sword-makers to intensify their efforts.”

Missile Defence makes US military policy more aggressive

17. According to the US Nuclear Posture Review, missile defence is not a purely defensive system, but a key component of the New Triad of military forces, to be used in conjunction with “offensive strike systems (both nuclear and non-nuclear)”. Missile defence will be used to enhance US nuclear forces by “coupling” nuclear capabilities with “active and passive defenses”.

18. Missile defences will therefore play a key role in a more aggressive US nuclear posture, which includes the development of new US nuclear weapons including bunker-busting mini-nukes, willingness to use nuclear weapons against seven named countries including China, and a probable resumption of nuclear testing.

19. According to reports in the *Washington Post*, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has also given the go ahead to the Pentagon to look at the option of using nuclear-tipped interceptors as part of a missile defence system.

20. Missile defence technologies also play a key role in US plans for “full spectrum dominance” – military domination and control of space. As General Joseph W. Ashy of US Space Command explained, the US has development programmes “in directed energy and hit-to-kill weapons because ‘we’re going to fight a war in space. We’re going to fight from space and we’re going to fight into space...’”

21. The Rumsfeld Space Commission also concluded that the US must ensure continuing superiority in space capabilities in order “both to deter and to defend against hostile acts in and from space”, including “uses of space hostile to US interests”.

22. US plans for domination of space have profound implications for international peace and security and risk triggering a future arms race in space. UK bases such as Menwith Hill and Fylingdales should not be used in US Missile Defence and Space strategies.

Conclusion

Eliminating weapons of mass destruction is the best defence against missile threats

23. The MoD discussion paper describes missile defence as “value for money”. Quite how the MoD has arrived at this judgement when it is unable to quantify the likely cost of participation in missile defence programmes, is unclear. Although the MoD indicates that there may be “opportunities” for UK industry and universities for participation in missile defence programmes, the major beneficiaries are likely to be the US arms companies.

24. Missile Defence is the most costly and high risk strategy for tackling the threat from ballistic missiles. A far more cost effective approach to the threat from ballistic missiles would be to eliminate the root causes of proliferation by diplomatic approaches. As UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Jayantha Dhanapala said in a recent statement:

“When all is said and done – after all the alternatives of missile defence, arms control, counter-proliferation, deterrence (extended or minimal), and the quixotic pursuit of “full-spectrum dominance” are tried – nothing quite delivers the concrete security benefits that all countries would enjoy from the total elimination of nuclear weapons. This is not simply an ideal, but arguably the most truly realistic of all approaches to international peace and security at the global strategic level.”