Countermeasures to the Proposed US National Missile Defense System

Recommended Citation

to "preserve US freedom of action" in the world—to permit the United States to intervene with its conventional forces without fear of reprisal on US cities.

The bottom line is that the United States is unlikely to know—with any significant degree of confidence—how effective its NMD system would be if it needed to respond to a threat in this case to assess the defense effectiveness under a range of conditions. The fact that the attacker controls some of these conditions—such as the time of day of the attack and the launch altitude—means that we can have very high confidence in what the effectiveness is, many tests are needed. Unlike the coin example, the outcome of an intercept attempt depends on many factors, so even more testing would be needed to build up sufficient confidence that the system is effective.

The same thing is true for the NMD system—the probability of intercepting an incoming warhead (or the effectiveness of the system) can only be determined through testing. And in order to have high confidence in what the system is capable of doing, it must be thoroughly tested. In contrast, the United States may begin deployment before such tests are performed.

The planned NMD system should then be tested against the countermeasures the Red Team determines would be available to potential attackers. As the American Physical Society, the threat analysis must assess what weapons a country is capable of developing, given its technical sophistication. However, since we know that the United States does not have complete confidence in what sensors and components the NMD system will incorporate. The attacker will have this information well in advance of US deployment, and can tailor its countermeasures to the specific NMD system that is being deployed.

We believe that the first criticism is clearly incorrect. Any country capable of building both an intercontinental-range ballistic missile and a nuclear or biological weapon to arm it with, and therefore possessed the technology and the scientific and engineering expertise required to build it. The United States is likely to know very little about the countermeasures an emerging missile state is developing. A potential attacker will understand the importance of not divulging what sensors and components the NMD system will incorporate. The attacker will have this information well in advance of US deployment, and can tailor its countermeasures to the specific NMD system that is being deployed.

We assume that the attacker can make a long-range missile and a nuclear or biological weapon to arm it with, and therefore possesses the technology and the scientific and engineering expertise required to build it. The United States is likely to know very little about the countermeasures an emerging missile state is developing. A potential attacker will understand the importance of not divulging what sensors and components the NMD system will incorporate. The attacker will have this information well in advance of US deployment, and can tailor its countermeasures to the specific NMD system that is being deployed.

In our analysis we assume that the NMD system has all of the sensors and interceptors planned for the full system that would be deployed by 2010 or later. This is the system the Pentagon says the United States would deploy. The United States has deployed some of these types of interceptors. We assume that the United States can build a system that has all of the sensors and interceptors planned for the full system that would be deployed by 2010 or later.

In contrast, the United States is likely to know very little about the countermeasures an emerging missile state is developing. A potential attacker will understand the importance of not divulging such information. The United States cannot build a system that has all of the sensors and interceptors planned for the full system that would be deployed by 2010 or later. Therefore, the United States may not be able to build a system that has all of the sensors and interceptors planned for the full system that would be deployed by 2010 or later.

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