U.S. MISSILE DEFENSE PROGRAMS

Recommended Citation

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The United States is currently developing a layered defense system designed to intercept and destroy incoming missiles at various stages—intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), intercontinental-range cruise missiles, and theater ballistic missiles. The system is being developed through three largely independent programs: the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), and the Navy Theater Wide (NTW). The SDI program, which is the most advanced of the three, is designed to intercept ICBMs at the boost phase, before they have had a chance to penetrate the atmosphere. The THAAD program is intended to provide defense against theater ballistic missiles, or those fired over a shorter range within a city or region. The NTW program is focused on defending against cruise missiles.

The U.S. military has been developing a layered defense system since the 1980s, aiming to create a system that can intercept incoming missiles at various stages of their flight, from boost phase to terminal phase. The system is designed to be capable of defending against a wide range of threats, including both ICBMs and theater missiles. The primary challenge for the U.S. military is to develop a system that is both effective and affordable, while also addressing potential political and strategic implications.

THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE

The SDI program was initiated in the 1980s as a response to the perceived threat of ICBMs from the Soviet Union. The program was initially known as the Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) and was later renamed the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) by President Ronald Reagan. The SDI program was designed to be a defensive system that would be able to intercept and destroy ICBMs at various stages of their flight, from boost phase to terminal phase. The SDI program was controversial from the outset, and it faced a number of challenges, including technical difficulties, cost overruns, and political opposition.

SDI received substantial funding during the Reagan administration, with the United States spending several billion dollars on the program. However, the program faced a number of technical challenges, including the development of effective interceptors and the need for a robust tracking system. The program also faced political opposition, particularly from some members of Congress and the defense industry, who were concerned about the cost of the program and its potential impact on other defense programs.

In the late 1980s, the SDI program was scaled back, with the United States focusing more on developing a system that could be deployed in stages and that could be used to defend against a range of threats. The program was eventually folded into the larger Theater Missile Defense (TMD) program, which was created in 1991.

THEATER HIGH ALTITUDE AREA DEFENSE (THAAD)

The THAAD program was initiated in 1980 as a response to the perceived threat of theater ballistic missiles from overseas bases. The program was designed to provide defense against theater ballistic missiles, or those fired over a shorter range within a city or region. The THAAD program is currently in development, with the first interceptors deployed in 2005.

The THAAD program is designed to be a mobile and transportable system that can be deployed quickly in response to a threat. The system is designed to be able to intercept incoming missiles at a variety of altitudes, from low to high. The THAAD program is also designed to be able to engage a wide range of threats, including both ICBMs and theater missiles.

THE NAVY THEATER WIDE (NTW)

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ARE DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULES REALISTIC?

The development schedules for the U.S. missile defense programs are controversial, with some experts arguing that they are unrealistic and that the programs are unlikely to be able to meet their stated goals. The principal argument against the programs is that they are too expensive and that the technology is not yet ready to be deployed.

Support for NMD built up more steam in 1998, when both Iran and North Korea surprised the intelligence community with ICBMs and SLBMs. North Korea was seen as actively developing an ICBM with a range of 8,000 kilometers, and continued to develop the Shahab 4 with an estimated range of at least 2,000 kilometers. Iran was seen as actively developing an ICBM and SLBM infrastructure.

The Clinton Administration devised its "3+3" program for developing a system over three years and deciding in 2000 whether to go forward. The Quadrennial Defense Review added an additional $2.3 billion to it, doubling planned costs over the six-year period. The Bush Administration then announced plans for a 

"ballistic missile defense system," but it did not specify how much it would cost. The Administration's would face.  Finally, its space-based elements might not be available as quickly as the above two systems.

The United States has more to lose than gain from deploying a defense system designed to intercept ICBMs at the boost phase. The United States currently has over 1,000 ICBMs, with a large number of them being deployed in long-range attack submarines. The United States also has access to a large number of ICBMs, with a large number of them being deployed in long-range attack submarines. The United States also has access to a large number of ICBMs, with a large number of them being deployed in long-range attack submarines.

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