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NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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MISSILE DEFENSE ACT

I would like to commend the members of the Armed Services Committee who, under the able leadership of the distinguished Chairman, Senator Thurmond, and the distinguished Senator from Georgia, Senator Nunn, have done a first rate job on the Defense Authorization Bill. In particular, I would like to congratulate the Armed Services Committee for the forward-looking "Missile Defense Act" contained in this bill.

The Missile Defense Act is unique because it does not just authorize appropriations for individual programs, it also provides a strategic logic -- principles, premises, and policies -- thereby integrating these programs into a coherent and comprehensive approach.

In my view, the approach adopted in this bill is very compelling on four important points.

Critical Imperative: Protecting America From Ballistic Missiles

First, this legislation firmly establishes the critical imperative of defending the United States of America from ballistic missiles. Morally, rationally, and constitutionally this must be our top priority.

Why is this important now? Very simply because the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them is dramatically increasing. I would like to commend the distinguished junior Senator from Arizona, Senator Kyl, for highlighting this threat, as well as the need to defend America against it, in his amendment.

The Missile Defense Act notes that weapons can be acquired by our potential adversaries far more quickly than they can produce them indigenously.

We can't wait around for years until this threat is literally on our doorstep. We must prepare now.

And so, I am very pleased with the national missile defense architecture established in the Missile Defense Act. This architecture includes ground-based interceptors, fixed ground-based radars and space-based sensors. The bill establishes a deployment goal of 2003 and provides an additional \$300 million to support that goal. In my view, that is a good start, but frankly for something as important as defending our citizens, I would like to see an increase to ensure that we will be able to meet the 2003 date.

Intelligent Approach to ABM Issues

Second, the Armed Services Committee's bill deals with the thorny ABM treaty questions through an intelligent two-step approach:

(1) Step One: It addresses what missile defenses are covered by the ABM treaty, namely by establishing the following standard: those actually tested against a ballistic missile with a range of over 3,500 kilometers and a reentry velocity of over 5 kilometers per second. This is the standard proposed by both Presidents Bush and Clinton. The point is that we should not drag theater systems into a treaty which was never intended to cover them.

(2) Step Two: Contrary to wild administration accusations, the bill reviews where we go next with regard to the ABM treaty. Now, I think we need to set straight what this bill does and does not do.

-- It does not set us on a collision course with the ABM treaty by mandating abrogation.

-- Indeed, it does not mandate any particular outcome.

-- It does recognize that an effective multiple site defense of the United States is inconsistent with the treaty as things stand today. The key issue here is that an effective defense requires multiple sites.

(more)

-- It does call for a year of careful consideration of these matters before we decide how to proceed on the ABM treaty. The bottom line is that the bill recognizes what we all should be aware of -- that mutual assured destruction, the doctrine underlying the ABM treaty is not a suitable basis for stability in a multipolar world, nor for an improving relationship with Russia. Our goal should be, as outlined in this legislation, to seek a cooperative -- and I stress cooperative -- transition to a more suitable regime to this post-cold war era.

Cruise Missile Defense Initiative

The third aspect of this bill that is noteworthy is that it establishes a cruise missile defense initiative. In view of the fact that potential adversaries now have access, in varying degrees, to the technologies necessary to build effective cruise missiles, this measure is on the mark and reflects considerable foresight. It is my understanding that in addressing cruise missiles, the Committee has in no way detracted from the emphasis placed on ballistic missiles which are a current and rapidly growing threat.

"Theater Missile Defense Core Program"

Finally, I would like to commend the establishment of a "Theater Missile Defense Core Program." The rationale behind theater missile defense is to deny a potential adversary the option of escalating by attacking or just threatening to attack U.S. forces, coalition partners, or vital interests. The key elements of this "core" program are three systems already being pursued by the Clinton administration -- namely Patriot-3, Navy Lower Tier, and Thaad -- as well as one critical addition: Navy Upper Tier. The Committee has wisely added \$170 million to Navy Upper Tier.

Just imagine trying to put together the Desert Storm coalition if Saddam Hussein could have credibly threatened London, Rome, Istanbul or Cairo with ballistic missiles. We cannot allow our political and military flexibility to be hindered. Therefore, our objective must be to prevent placing our forces, or those of our allies, needlessly in harm's way -- with systems such as Thaad and Navy Lower Tier.

Furthermore, the United States must have the ability to project a regional ballistic missile defense capability where and when we need it. Navy Upper Tier give us that capability.

I would also like to note that the bill does save some money by terminating the boost phase intercept program and adding a lesser amount to explore fulfilling the same mission with an unmanned air vehicle (UAV), in conjunction with Israel. Given Israel's expertise in UAV's and its keen interest in a boost phase interceptor, this makes sense to me.

In addition, I would like to emphasize that the programs and approach contained in the Missile Defense Act should be viewed as an integral part of our counter-proliferation strategy. If our adversaries know that their hard-gained missiles will be of not use against America and its allies, they may well be dissuaded from acquiring them in the first place.

Priority to Protect Nation's Security With Superior Technology

Before I conclude, I would like to address the issue of how much all of this costs: \$3.4 billion. This is a substantial price tag, but does not represent even two percent of the total Department of Defense budget. More importantly, however, in considering the costs associated with missile defense, we need to keep in mind how the threat to our nation's security and to our interests has changed.

For two centuries, oceans protected us. Now technology gives even relatively weak adversaries the hope of attacking or blackmailing the United States. This bill takes concrete steps to protect us and sends the clear message that we will defend our homeland with our superior technology. Moreover, America has, and will continue to have, vital interests around the globe which must be protected, as well.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 3:50 p.m.