

www.nytimes.com

The New York Times
 ON THE WEB

JUL 13, 2001

Pentagon Sets Ambitious Tests of Missile Plan

By JAMES DAO

WASHINGTON, July 12 — Senior Pentagon officials announced details today of an ambitious missile-testing plan that they said could lead to a working system of land-based, sea-launched and airborne weapons in four years. Senate Democrats immediately attacked the proposal, saying it was highly likely to violate the Antiballistic Missile Treaty within a year.

Democrats, responding to testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, accused the Bush administration of being intentionally vague about the new plan to lure Congress into financing work that might violate the ABM treaty next year. And they threatened to block any spending that seemed likely to breach that treaty.

"The administration's plans for missile defense for fiscal year 2002 have been harder to zero in on than a target in a missile defense test," said Senator Carl Levin, a Michigan Democrat who is chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

"The president alone has the right to withdraw from a treaty, but Congress has the heavy responsibility of determining whether or not to appropriate the funds for activities that conflict with a treaty," he said, raising his voice at times.

The clash occurred as Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz provided the most detailed description yet of the administration's vision for missile defenses. Mr. Wolfowitz outlined to senators a two-tiered strategy of negotiating with Russia to amend the treaty while aggressively testing antimissile technologies, particularly ship-launched interceptors, land-based missiles and jet-mounted lasers.

Some of those tests, Mr. Wolfowitz predicted, would clash with the ABM treaty "in months rather than in years," though he declined to be more precise. He said the administration was prepared to withdraw from the treaty if the Russians did not agree to changes to allow those tests. The 1972 treaty with the Soviet Union prohibits the development and deployment of nationwide defenses against long-range ballistic missiles.

"We are on a collision course," Mr. Wolfowitz told the committee. "No one is pretending that what we're doing is consistent with that treaty. We have either got to withdraw from it or replace it."

As part of the plan for encouraging Russia to amend the treaty, Mr. Wolfowitz also said, the Pentagon plans to begin reducing the nation's nuclear arsenal by 1,000 weapons, or nearly one-seventh, in the coming year by scrapping 50 MX missiles, retiring 33 B-1 bombers and replacing nuclear-tipped missiles on two Trident submarines with conventional weapons.

The Democrats' sharp criticism indicated that the qualified support for the Bush




**Experience
the difference:**

- Rated #1 online broker*
- Over a decade of online investing experience
- 24/7 service from Series 7-trained reps
- Quality research, plus 6 independent sources

*Invest
online
with*



[Apply now](#)

*Barron's, March 12, 2001

proposal from some arms control experts had not allayed Democratic concerns about the plan.

The hearing was held as the Pentagon was preparing for its first attempt to shoot down an intercontinental ballistic missile in a year, on Saturday. The last two flight tests failed, and the test on Saturday is being closely watched as a potential barometer for whether the program should be slowed or accelerated.

Trying to reduce expectations for the test, senior Pentagon officials have argued that the administration will remain committed to the program, even if the interception missed, asserting that failure would yield as much useful data as success.

Democrats, on the other hand, have warned that the administration should not use a successful interception to justify a swift withdrawal from the ABM treaty or rushed deployment of missile defenses.

The new accelerated testing schedule calls for 10 flight tests through next year involving ground-based interceptors, according to a Pentagon document. It also proposes seven flight tests involving interceptors fired from ships, even though the Navy has yet to develop a missile fast enough to hit an intercontinental ballistic missile.

The plan proposes building a "test bed" in Alaska that would include a command center and five missile silos at Fort Greely, near Fairbanks, and about five more silos on Kodiak Island. The plan also calls for upgrading radar in Alaska and Aegis radar systems on ships to track long-range missiles.

In today's hearing, Lt. Gen. Ronald Kadish, director of the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization, said that the Pentagon would consider declaring the Fort Greely site a working missile-defense system if a crisis seemed imminent, possibly by 2005.

"We have designed the program so that in an emergency, and if directed, we might quickly deploy test assets to defend against a rapidly growing threat," General Kadish testified. "But barring such an emergency, we do not intend to deploy assets until they are ready."

Though the general said the new sites were intended to allow for more realistic tests, arms-control advocates contend that the Bush administration is trying to begin deployment of a working missile shield under the guise of testing, because the ABM treaty allows certain types of tests.

"They are trying to claim that they are staying within the confines of the treaty because this is only a testing program," said Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers. "Will the allies and Congress be fooled? I hope not."

Though Mr. Wolfowitz said Pentagon lawyers were reviewing the plan to see which tests might run afoul of the ABM treaty, he hinted at one that might — trying to track a long-range missile with a ship-based radar system designed for monitoring shorter-range missiles. The ABM treaty allows defenses against shorter-range missiles, but it bars using that technology against intercontinental ballistic missiles.

"Will these tests exceed the limits of the treaty?" Mr. Wolfowitz asked. "In each case,

there will be those who argue on all three sides of the coin." He said that by the time such tests arrive, the administration expected to have reached an agreement with Russia. If it has not, he added, "we would be left with two, less than optimal choices — to allow an obsolete treaty to prevent us from defending America or to withdraw from the treaty unilaterally, which we have every right to do."

Those views were echoed by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, who told a group of supporters of missile defense that the treaty was "an impediment" to robust testing.

Despite Mr. Wolfowitz's assurances otherwise, some Democrats said they would push to cut the administration's request to increase missile defense spending by \$3 billion next year.

"I think if we throw out the ABM treaty here, we're throwing out the baby with the bath water," Senator Max Cleland, Democrat of Georgia, said. "Congress ought to use the power of the purse in rejecting this increase."