

"Wolfowitz Challenged On Missile Defense R&D Program, ABM Conflicts"
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While expressing guarded support for missile defense, several Democratic members of the House Armed Services Committee challenged Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz on key points of the Bush Administration's accelerated test plans and their possible impact on the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty.

Ranking Minority Member Ike Skelton (D-Missouri) opened the July 19 hearing by saying that the Administration's proposed \$3 billion increase in missile defense funding would pay the salary of the entire enlisted Marine Corps for a year.

While expressing support for missile defense overall, he cautioned against the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization's (BMDO) current plans to test a variety of different missile defense technologies at once.

"I support you, and I want to continue to support you, [but] it's hard to support a program that says 'Let's buy everything and throw it against a wall and see what sticks,'" he said.

Congressman John Spratt echoed Skelton during his questioning of Wolfowitz, saying, "I've often said that one of the problems with ballistic missile defense is not that we have lacked funding so much as we have lacked focus.

"Once we focused on a ground-based, midcourse interceptor, then we were able to bring it to the point that we witnessed Saturday night, where it achieved a relative success," Spratt continued. "My concern is that we're going off in pursuit of a lot of birds in the bush, while we don't yet quite have that bird in our hand."

Wolfowitz replied that BMDO's broad approach would eliminate reliance on a single system. He praised BMDO Director Lt. Gen. Ronald Kadish, who also testified before the committee.

"I think Gen. Kadish and his people have come up with a program that is designed to keep focus, and also to go along branch points [toward] things that look more promising to invest in," said Wolfowitz.

"I really do believe that we need to pursue a broader range of solutions than just a single solution, for a number of reasons, including the fact that if you have multiple intercept points, you're going to have a more effective defense," he said.

He also said that boost-phase intercept, which could be the most promising and effective method of destroying missiles, was "one of the areas that we have, I think, not had much focus on."

ABM implications Spratt also criticized BMDO and the Administration for their recently

announced plans to build new test facilities at Ft. Greely, Alaska as part of an expanded missile defense test bed, calling the plans "a significant move" that might constitute a "near-term violation" of the ABM treaty.

The treaty prohibits the development or deployment of missile defense systems that are based at sea, in the air, in space, or on mobile land platforms. A 1974 protocol to the treaty also prohibits the signatories from deploying more than a single ground-based interceptor site.

Spratt also questioned whether joint disarmament initiatives such as START III could still be pursued if the ABM treaty is abandoned.

Wolfowitz said that the beginning of construction on the Ft. Greely site, set to begin next spring or summer, would probably be the first "serious issue" that would raise the specter of treaty violation.

He emphasized, however, that "it's an ambiguous event because it can be argued to be a test facility, and therefore permitted, or it could be argued to be a deployment, and therefore not permitted."

Wolfowitz expressed hope that by the time construction begins, some kind of "cooperative outcome" has been reached with Russia.

However, he added, "until we resolve ... the issues we would not be testing missiles out of those silos."

Rep. Thomas Allen (D-Maine) asked Wolfowitz why the treaty needed to be changed or abandoned at all, since it does not prohibit the development of defenses against short-range and medium-range missile attacks on American troops, which arguably constitute the single greatest threat to U.S. interests.

"Your argument is we have to do away with the ABM treaty within months, not years, on the grounds that the treaty prohibits testing of promising technologies needed to defend against real emerging threats," he said. "I don't get it."

Wolfowitz responded by saying "a significant portion of this budget is devoted to those shorter-range, slower-speed missiles," including the PAC-3 and Navy Area Wide systems, which alone constitute \$1.3 billion of the \$3 billion budget increase.

However, he said, "many of these [missile defense] technologies are dual-application. When you're intercepting a missile in boost phase, you don't discriminate whether it's short range or long range."

He pointed to the Airborne Laser program, which would destroy missiles in boost phase by targeting them with a high-energy laser from a modified Boeing 747 (DAILY, July 19), as an example of a system that would be "virtually ... impossible" to field within ABM

treaty guidelines, but which holds great promise for countering any number of missile threats, regardless of range.

Wolfowitz received support from Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.), who pointed out that since the ABM treaty was an agreement between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union, countries of concern such as North Korea, China, Iraq, or Iran have no obligations under it.