

www.nytimes.com

The New York Times
ON THE WEB

JUL 18, 2001

Pentagon Revives Reagan - Era Proposal

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filed at 4:30 a.m. ET

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (AP) -- In its push for more aggressive research into missile defense technologies, the Pentagon has proposed the first test of a space-based interceptor by 2006.

Details of the test are not yet worked out, and space-based weaponry -- though a long-range possibility -- is not the Pentagon's first priority for missile defense, said Robert Snyder, executive director of the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization, which manages the Pentagon missile defense research.

Speaking to reporters Tuesday at an Army-sponsored briefing on missile defense, Snyder said the proposed test would aim to demonstrate the concept of hitting a ballistic missile early in its flight with a projectile launched from space.

The concept was first pursued in the 1980s as part of President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, which aimed to create an impenetrable shield against attack on the United States by thousands of Soviet missiles. It never progressed to an actual test in space and was shelved in the early 1990s.

The Reagan administration also pursued putting lasers and X-rays in space as missile defense weapons, but they never were tested in space.

In the experiment planned for 2005-06, the projectile would not be based on a satellite because it would be intended only to prove the basic concept; instead it would be launched into space aboard a rocket, oriented as if it had been stationed in space and then released to chase down its target, Snyder said.

Snyder also said improvements and expansion of the Pacific testing range for missile defense will cost about \$2 billion, of which \$800 million is proposed for the 2002 budget. The Pentagon has told Congress the expansion is needed for more frequent and realistic testing.

Baker Spring, a missile defense expert at the Heritage Foundation, a Washington-based think tank, said it is debatable whether the experiment planned by 2006 would violate the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty. It clearly would be a violation, he said, if a spaced-based interceptor were deployed.

He said the issue of treaty violation is probably moot since the Bush administration has said it intends to go beyond the ABM treaty with other kinds of tests even before 2005. President Bush wants to either replace the treaty with some other arrangement that would permit missile defense deployment or exercise the U.S. right to withdraw from it after a six-month notice.

MAKE YOUR MONEY
GO FARTHER.

APR AS LOW AS

2.99%

INTRO OR

9.99%

ONGOING

● **APPLY NOW!**NextCard[™] Visa

Click here!

● **APPLY NOW!**

The Bush administration has not publicly emphasized the space-based weapon concept because it recalls the "Star Wars" tag that Reagan's critics attached to his Strategic Defense Initiative. The administration is focusing most of its missile defense efforts on anti-missile weapons based on land, at sea and in the air.

Snyder said that although the space-based concept is unproven, it has certain attractive aspects.

"The space assets are there, they're global, they're sitting up there in orbit available to use whenever," he said. "There's an advantage to global satellites and global interceptors in the sense that they're always there."

During the administration of Bush's father, the Pentagon briefly pursued a version of space-based missile defense that it called Brilliant Pebbles. It was based on the notion of building a constellation of 3,600 to 4,000 orbiting satellites from which anti-missile projectiles could be launched.

^-----

On the Net: Ballistic Missile Defense Organization:
<http://www.acq.osd.mil/bmdo/bmdolink/html/bmdolink.html>

Copyright 2001 The Associated Press | [Privacy Information](#)