

Nuclear Shorts

Missile Defense Fail but Still Get Billion\$

Over 60 advocates, former military officers, lawmakers, and government officials have asked the Biden White House to delay or cancel parts of the scandal-ridden missile defense program. In a June 3 letter they slam the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) program, a \$926 million item in this year's \$8.9 billion Missile Defense Agency's budget. The program has been "rushed, chaotic and ultimately counter-productive ..., has resulted in a failed test record [and] wasted billions of dollars," the group wrote.



Military intelligence, famous for its oxymorons, identifies this photo as, "Ground-Based Midcourse Defense Sea-Based X band radar platform arrives in Pearl Harbor." US Navy photo by Ryan McGinley.

The signatories include former Defense Secretary William Perry, former Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes, former Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Countryman, and former Senators Tom Harkin and Tom Daschle. They argue the Navy's missile test interception last year "threatened Russia's and China's confidence in their strategic deterrent," and they urged Biden to delay the Aegis missile program by limiting production of ships and missiles. The White House's budget proposal included \$1 billion for Lockheed Martin's Aegis system, and \$647 million for the interceptors.

The World Policy Institute reported in 2004 that the four top missile-defense contractors back then — Lockheed Martin, Boeing, TRW and Raytheon — spent \$34 million on lobbying and \$6.9 million on campaign contributions in fiscal year 1997-'98. The legal bribery pays off, as GMD outlays were estimated in 2013 to total \$40.9 billion through fiscal year 2017, according to the House Committee on Oversight and the US Government Accountability Office. — *Defense News*, June 3, 2021; Hudson Institute 2019 annual report; "Missile Defense Fraud Goes Ballistic," Nukewatch Special Report, 2005.

Nuclear Weapons Lobbyists Win Contracts that Buy More Lobbying

In June, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) published "Complicit: 2020 Global Nuclear Weapons Spending," and its details will help abolitionists demonstrate how the nuclear weapons industry protects its government contracts. Last year the United States spent \$37.4 billion on nuclear weapons and just the 21 major nuclear weapons producers profiled in the report spent \$117 million in lobbying Congress. For every \$1 they spent lobbying, an average of \$236 in nuclear-weapons-contract money came back. For example:

- Boeing spent \$15.6 million lobbying and was awarded \$105 million for nuclear weapons work.
- Lockheed Martin, spent \$15 million lobbying, and was awarded \$2.1 billion for nuclear weapons work.
- Northrop Grumman spent \$13.3 million lobbying, and was awarded \$13.7 billion for nuclear weapons work.
- Raytheon Technologies spent \$15.2 million lobbying, and was awarded \$450 million for nuclear weapons work.

ICAN's 73-page report details \$5-to-\$10 million in donations that the nuclear weapons contractors made to "think tanks" whose writers promote weapons programs, manufacture fear, and discourage disarmament, enabling lawmakers to con their constituents and to vote for more weapons.

— ICANw.org, "Complicit: 2020 Global Nuclear Weapons Spending," June 2020

"Advanced" Reactors: Not So

Promoters of "advanced" nuclear reactors tout them as the best future energy source, but the reality is familiar and dismal. A new analysis by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) found that new reactor designs generate large volumes of radioactive wastes (same as always), are no safer to operate than old designs, and actually increase the risk of radioactive materials falling into the wrong hands.

Untested new designs, often promoted by companies that have lost money from the closure of old reactors, are usually called molten salt reactors, sodium-cooled fast reactors, or high-temperature gas reactors, and are as unsafe as they sound, the UCS says. The schemes all require fuel reprocessing or special uranium fuel, both of which involve complicated supply chains and encourage nuclear terrorism. As usual, questions about long-term storage of (especially liquid) radioactive waste created by the reactors go unanswered by proponents.

This makes it doubly disappointing that in his recent infrastructure plan President Biden included new reactors as an "important technology." Tests to establish that the new designs are at all safe will take years. By the time any new designs are properly tested, the UCS said, scientists and engineers could have used government funding to scale-up safe, cheaper, and more reliable renewables like wind and solar. Advancing with nuclear likely leaves us with old fashioned problems that are hugely expensive, dangerous from the start, and deadly waste generators.

— "3 Advanced Reactor Systems to Watch by 2030," Energy.gov, April 12; "Not So Advanced," Natural Resources Defense Council, March 24; "Scientists Say Advanced Nuclear Reactors Not Safer than Conventional Plants," *Insurance Journal*, March 22; "'Advanced' Isn't Always Better," Union of Concerned Scientists, March 18, 2021

Maj. Gen.: ICBMs "incredibly dangerous"

Maj. Gen. Anthony Genatempo, commander of the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center in New Mexico, told *Air Force Magazine* in June that replacing today's Minuteman III missiles is crucial for the Air Force personnel "who have to be around that incredibly dangerous weapon system." Genatempo said the things that keep him up at night regarding Minuteman missiles are heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems ... that have never been replaced — and the failure of "which would take a missile offline for an unknown amount of time as it is fixed."

Genatempo then pivoted and claimed that the long-range, land-based nuclear weapons are "safe and reliable." He was trying to promote the Minuteman's retirement and said, "We are building [the replace-

ment] to be a 70-year weapon system...." Never mind the 1970 Nonproliferation Treaty in which the US pledged to pursue nuclear disarmament "at an early date."

The general's concern may be feigned, since even a computer failure that cut off contact with 50 Minute-man III missiles at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming in October of 2010 was said by Lt. Gen. Arlen Jameson to have had "no real bearing on the capabilities of our nuclear forces..." inadvertently confirming that land-based nuclear weapons are obsolete and needless.

— *Air Force Magazine*, "New GBSD Will Fly in 2023," June 14, 2021; CNN, "Computer problem blamed for missile site malfunction," Oct. 28, 2010

Workers Evacuated after "Alarming" Leak from Maryland Research Reactor

On February 3, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in Gaithersburg, Maryland had a radiation leak during the restart of its research reactor. Temperatures inside a single fuel element reached over 850° F leaving it damaged. An alarm sounded, and the reactor was shut down. Although the amount of radiation released has not been revealed, it was high enough to warrant decontamination of ten employees who were then sent home. Federal regulators revealed later that the leak was "three times higher than originally thought." This fact was followed with the assurance that the leak posed no danger to thousands of residents living in homes or visiting several large shopping centers close to the reactor. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission reported a month later that it was "satisfied that people around and near NIST remain safe." However, the National Academy of Sciences concluded in its book-length *Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation-VII* that any amount of radiation exposure is dangerous, especially for women and girls.

Residents around the NIST complex were "alarmed" that they were not notified about the incident. No official announcement was made. The fact that workers were exposed to radiation and evacuated is unusual. David Lochbaum, a nuclear researcher with the Union of Concerned Scientists, says, "It's alarming and uncommon to hear of an incident that requires the evacuation of workers inside a reactor." The level of caution prompting decontamination and evacuation of workers would also warrant notification of local communities. Four months later the reactor remains shut down.

— NIST, May 6; NBC News, Mar. 31; Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Mar. 4, 2021

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Some resources noted in this edition

- ***Alliance for Nuclear Accountability**, Web: ananuclear.org; Email: orep@earthlink.net or (202) 681-8401
- ***Haul No!**, Web: haulno.com; Email: stopcanyonmine@gmail.com
- ***Hanford Challenge**, 2719 E Madison St, # 304, Seattle, WA 98112 (206) (292) 2850; Web: hanfordchallenge.org; Email: info@hanfordchallenge.org
- ***Int'l Coalition to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN**, Web: icanw.org
- ***Los Alamos Study Group**, 2901 Summit Pl. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87106; (505) 265-1200; Web: lasg.org; Email: gmello@lasg.org
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- ***Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance (OREPA)**, PO Box 5743, Oak Ridge, TN 37831; (865) 776-5050; Email: orep@earthlink.net; Web: orep.org
- ***Radiation and Public Health Project**, PO Box 1260; Ocean City, NJ 08226; Email: odiejoe@aol.com; Web: radiation.org
- ***Safecast**, Olympisch Stadion 24-28, 1076 DE Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Email: info@safecast.org; Web: safecast.org
- ***Southwest Research and Information Center**, PO Box 4524, Albuquerque, NM 87196; (505) 262-1862; Email: Info@srlic.org; Web: srlic.org