



## **Perspectives On President's Planned Missile Defense System**

**GUESTS: Eric Miller, Project On Government Oversight,  
& Frank Gaffney, Center for Security Policy  
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**DAVID HAFFENREFFER, CNNfn ANCHOR, MONEY & MARKETS:** President Bush made no mention of it in his State of the Union Address earlier this week, but he has asked the Pentagon to begin putting in place the first stages of a U.S.-based missile defense system as soon as September.

The Pentagon has been testing this costly program for the past couple of months now. But in a report out this week, defense officials say they cannot yet guarantee its reliability. So should the U.S. take a slower approach to missile defense?

Joining us now with their thoughts on the issue, Eric Miller, senior defense investigator for the Project on Government Oversight, as well as Frank Gaffney, president of the Center For Security Policy, both of whom join us today from Washington, D.C.

Gentlemen, thanks for coming on the program

**ERIC MILLER, SENIOR DEFENSE INVESTIGATOR, PROJECT ON GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT: Glad to be here.**

**FRANK GAFFNEY, PRESIDENT, CENTER FOR SECURITY POLICY: Thank you**

**HAFFENREFFER:** Eric, tell me, we got this idea from a "The Washington Post" article that came out recently talking about how the testing is not yet up to snuff on this front, is my guess here, after reading the article. What are your thoughts of where the project is now and the desirability, I guess, the cost benefit side of things when you look at this program?

**MILLER: We heard today that the chief Pentagon's independent tester will not test this system before it's deployed. And he has some caution about whether the system will even work.**

**The next defense budget we're going to spend \$10 billion -- approaching \$10 billion to develop this system, and we have no idea if it's going to work. And the president has already ordered that it be deployed this fall. So there's a big question as to whether it will work.**

**HAFFENREFFER:** Frank, give us a sense what this program is at this point, and whether or not we need such a program anymore, when it seems like the type of warfare we're fighting these days is considerably different than from back, say, in the '80s.

**GAFFNEY:** Well, the threat is different but that doesn't mean we don't need the system. The

system has evolved, I think, properly to address an evolving threat. Let me give you one particular scenario that's worried me.

That is the possibility that we will be dealing not simply with dangerous rogue states, North Korea comes to mind, with missiles capable of reaching this country in the future with perhaps nuclear warheads. But the Osama bin Ladens of the world, getting their hands on shorter-range missiles, which they might launch from tramp steamers, of which Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda is thought to have maybe as many 20, off the coast of the United States, able to inflict immense damage on a city near the coast, and attendant loss of life.

That is something we cannot defend against today, and I believe a layered defense, ideally, one involving over time. One that has been tested in various parts and in some aspects like the Navy program, in a quite comprehensive way, an operation operational way, even, is the exactly the right thing to be doing, if only we would be doing it faster, frankly, rather than as long as September.

HAFFENREFFER: Eric, when you listen to that list of various threats in Frank's perspective there, talk to me a little about the cost of this program, and how you view those threats and the cost that it takes to protect us against them.

MILLER: There are a myriad of systems involved in missile defense. And the Missile Defense Agency was consolidated to take care of everything from short-range missiles to the longer range intercontinental ballistic missiles.

We're spending an awful lot of money on this, and I would say that from what I've seen so far, the testing has been very limited on all of these systems. Some have been tested more than others. And we really ought to know that they work before we count on them. We're just going to have a false kind of sense of security if we don't know if they really work.

GAFFNEY: You know, on that point, if I may just jump in

HAFFENREFFER: Sure.

GAFFNEY: The interesting thing to me, having argued for a missile defense system for a long time and monitored sort of public opinion about it, the vast majority of Americans think we already have protection against this threat. Just as we do against airplanes or naval bombardment or invasion from the land.

This is a yawning gap in our defensive posture. And I think as part of an effort to respond to a myriad of potential means of attacking us, particularly that would be available to these terrorists in the post-9/11 period, it makes sense for us to do what we can.

And I would argue, again, addressing this in sort of an emergency basis, and doing what you do in those sorts of circumstances, which is take what you have at hand, test it, of course. Deploy it Improve it. Test it some more. Improve it. Until you've got something that is really highly

effective, especially operated with other systems.

HAFFENREFFER: But we have gone into military situations before, Eric, where we are using weapons programs that are not completely tested. Is that correct?

MILLER: That is true. I think the majority of weapons get thoroughly tested. And the independent tester in this situation is a guy who tests all major weapons systems. And he has no vested interest in it. The testing so far on the missile defense systems have been mainly by the contractor and the services that are going to use the weapons.

The operational tester is an independent, has no stake in the outcome, and he is going to test these systems against realistic targets. So far that hasn't really been done yet. It is pretty matter of fact that most major weapons systems get thoroughly tested before they are deployed. There are exceptions to that.

And there are certain levels of testing different levels that have been done on weapons before they're deployed. But in general, it's a good idea to really know what your vulnerabilities are, and how well a weapons system works before you put it into commission.

HAFFENREFFER: On the subject of where our vulnerability

GAFFNEY: I disagree with that.

HAFFENREFFER: on our vulnerability side of things, Frank, as you mentioned, perhaps the Navy should be efforting something more along the lines of the sea-based strategy. Do you have any ideas or any thoughts? Are you hearing anything about maybe anybody spearheading anything on that front?

GAFFNEY: Well, the Navy actually has, I think, a very attractive contribution to make to this. Principally because we actually have highly tested, operationally capable Navy ships called Aegis equipped ships, a fleet air defense system that is already well advanced in being adapted for a missile defense role.

The Navy, unfortunately, has not gotten really behind turning those ships in to fully capable missile dense ships. They perform a lot of other functions, and there's a lot of jealousy about applying them to this mission. It's especially against that threat that I mentioned, a tramp steamer off our coasts that could at any moment destroy an American city is something I think the Navy, the operational tester, the Pentagon, all of us, have an interest in going doing something about as quickly as we can.

And I have the feeling the Navy's best position to do that, and by the way, thanks to the investment we made in those Aegis ship, some 60 them so far. It could be done for a fraction of cost of other missile defense systems at have to be built from scratch.

HAFFENREFFER: Consider, with that idea in mind, Eric, did it surprise you the president did

not mention this program in his State of the Union Address? Obviously, he only has so much time to play with in that particular speech, but no mention?

MILLER: Yeah, not surprised. It's almost become a political issue, I think. Two years ago the president said he wanted to deploy this system, and we really didn't know how effective it would be. In fact, there were indications to the contrary that the testing had been very rudimentary and that there was a long ways to go before we really know if it works. I'm not surprised he didn't mention it.

And it is also a \$10 billion expenditure, rather costly when you're talking about other needs. You can debate whether you need the system, how bad the threat is. And you can also debate whether money should possibly be spent in other areas.

HAFFENREFFER: Yes, there's a lot of that.

GAFFNEY: But you know the reason I think didn't mention it, was frankly, because it's not a political issue anymore. This is an issue that now has now really been resolved in favor of deploying a missile defense system as soon as we can. There will certainly continue to debate about it, but it is not the kind of debate that I think warranted the focus that he had to give to other more pressing problems at the moment.

HAFFENREFFER: All right, we'll leave it there. Frank Gaffney from the Center for Security Policy and Eric Miller from Project on Government Oversight.

Thank you both for being with us.

MILLER: Thank you.

GAFFNEY: Thank you.