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**GLOBAL MISSILE DEFENSE: THE CASE FOR A NEW OPERATIONAL
COMMAND STRUCTURE**

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy

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ABSTRACT

With the very short timeline for a ballistic missile attack on the United States, unity of effort of all BMDS assets under one commander is essential for rapid decision-making and execution. Unfortunately, the current approach to executing the missile defense mission, as outlined in Unified Command Plan 2002 (UCP 02), violates the principle of unity of command. By placing components of the BMDS under the control of different combatant commanders it creates unnecessary friction in a process where speed of execution is measured in seconds. This flaw is not significant enough to threaten the basic function of the system but it does prevent it from operating as efficiently as possible. This paper proposes a single Joint Force Commander (JFC) that has operational control (OPCON) of all elements of the BMDS to mitigate risk by ensuring that all seams are removed from the ICBM kill chain.

I. Introduction

The United States is currently in the process of developing the capability of defending itself from a small-scale attack with inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBM). This capability has several components that are integrated into a single entity known as the Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS). The guiding principle for the design of this system is that the most effective defense is a layered defense that provides multiple opportunities to engage the threat missile during its entire flight.¹ Because ICBM flight times are measured in a matter of minutes, these layers must be carefully integrated to work properly. As the director of the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) said recently:

All of these layered defense elements must be integrated. And there must be a battle management, command and control system that can engage or reengage targets as appropriate. And it all must work within a window of a few minutes. We believe that a layered missile defense not only increases the chances that the hostile missile and its payload will be destroyed, but it also can be very effective against countermeasures and must give pause to potential adversaries.²

With the very short timeline for a ballistic missile attack on the United States, unity of effort of all BMDS assets under one commander is essential for rapid decision-making and execution. Unfortunately, the current approach to executing the missile defense mission, as outlined in Unified Command Plan 2002 (UCP 02), violates the principle of unity of command. As it stands today, the Secretary of Defense would have to communicate with three different combatant commanders if he received unambiguous warning that North Korea was about to launch an ICBM at the continental United States (CONUS). First, he would have to talk to United States Northern Command

¹ Department of Defense, Nuclear Posture Review, 31 December 2001, p.25

² LTG Ronald Kadish, "Missile Defense Program and FY 2005 Budget", Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 11 March 2004, p.3

(NORTHCOM) about alerting the Ground-based Mid-course Defense (GMD) Brigade that controls the interceptor missiles at Fort Greely, Alaska. Next, he would have to talk to United States Pacific Command (PACOM) to ensure that ships with the modified SPY-1D radar were on station to detect a launch. Finally, he would have to talk to United States Strategic Command (STRATCOM) about pre-emptive global strike options on known or suspected ICBM launch sites.

By placing components of the BMDS under the control of different combatant commanders it creates unnecessary friction in a process where speed of execution is measured in seconds. This flaw is not significant enough to threaten the basic function of the system but it does prevent it from operating as efficiently as possible.

A perfect system would be impossible to create. As the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Richard Myers, has pointed out, there is no way to create a perfectly seamless command and control (C2) structure unless all military assets were placed under one “global command”.

Whether we divide our combatant commanders’ responsibilities and authorities along functional lines and address them on a global basis or instead choose to deal with them along regional lines, we create “seams.” Seams—that is, the discontinuities where one command’s responsibilities end and another’s begin—are unavoidable, unless we take the impractical step of making one commander responsible for everything, everywhere, all the time. However, seams can become vulnerabilities that our adversaries might exploit. Therefore, when organizing our combatant commands, we strive to place seams where it makes the most sense to place them—where they provide us the greatest effectiveness and efficiencies and present our adversaries with the least opportunity to do us harm.³

So, the issue is where to place the seams so they create the least amount of risk. This paper proposes a single Joint Force Commander (JFC) that has operational control

³ GEN Richard Myers, “Shift to a Global Perspective”, Naval War College Review. Autumn 2003, p.14.

(OPCON) of all elements of the BMDS to mitigate risk by ensuring that all seams are removed from the ICBM kill chain.

II. Background

The current missile defense structure is the combined product of several sources of guidance. The sources include historical precedent, Presidential guidance, Secretary of Defense guidance, and joint doctrine. This guidance collectively defines what missile defense is and how it should be executed. As might be expected, some elements of the guidance are contradictory, so it is important to review the disconnects to determine which ones should be observed.

The first disconnect involves whether to organize missile defense along traditional regional lines, or to do it along functional lines and take a global perspective. This sparks a debate whether or not functional combatant commanders can be a supported command.⁴ Current missile defense policy has evolved out of new thinking on the effectiveness of deterrence. The DoD's Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) delivered to Congress in December 2001 outlined the need to address the threat from states that may not be deterred by America's nuclear triad. The NPR proposed a "New Triad" composed of offenses (both nuclear and non-nuclear strike), defenses, and revitalized defense infrastructure.⁵ Defenses play a role in preventing attack on the U.S. in the first place and in protecting the nation in the event missiles are launched. The new policy in the NPR coincided with a Presidential decision to withdraw from the 1972 Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABMT) with Russia.

⁴ Ibid. p.16

⁵ Nuclear Posture Review, p. ii.

The command structure to support the NPR recommendations is extremely important. “The effectiveness of this New Triad depends upon command and control, intelligence, and adaptive planning. ‘Exquisite’ intelligence on the intentions and capabilities of adversaries can permit timely adjustments to the force and improve the precision with which it can strike and defend. The ability to plan the employment of the strike and defense forces flexibly and rapidly will provide the U.S. with a significant advantage in managing crises, deterring attack and conducting military operations.”⁶ Two key supporting documents make this command structure a reality: Unified Command Plan 2002 (Change 2) and National Security Presidential Directive 23 (NSPD-23).

The first step in implementing the New Triad was a realignment of the combatant command structure in October 2002 which combined United States Space Command (SPACECOM) and STRATCOM and created a new STRATCOM.⁷ This change to the Unified Command Plan 2002 (UCP 02) was followed by a second change in January 2003 that formally assigned Integrated Missile Defense (IMD) as a STRATCOM responsibility. This “Change 2” was necessary to align the UCP with the President’s National Policy on Ballistic Missile Defense (NSPD-23) signed in December 2002. NSPD-23 answers the question “what is missile defense?” while Change 2 to UCP 02 answers the question “who executes missile defense?”

The first question is fairly straightforward. Missile defense is the protection of the United States, its territories, its deployed forces, as well as allies and friends from attack by all forms of ballistic missiles. For this reason, NSPD-23 makes a point of

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Myers, p.13

highlighting the elimination of “the artificial distinction between ‘national’ and ‘theater’ missile defenses.”⁸ Missile defense is an activity that occurs on a global scale, and it is an activity that must be synchronized on a global scale.

The second question, who executes missile defense, has a less direct answer. Change 2 to UCP 02 adds Integrated Missile Defense (IMD) to STRATCOM’s task list. At first blush this might imply STRATCOM is responsible for defending the United States against missile attack. In fact, the Army component command of STRATCOM, US Army Space and Missile Defense Command (SMDC), is the higher headquarters for the 100th Missile Defense Brigade which operates the GMD interceptors in Alaska and the fire control centers in Alaska and Colorado.⁹ But the specified responsibility is “planning, integrating and coordinating global missile defense operations and support.”¹⁰ When this is combined with the common task of all combatant commanders to defend the United States against attack, you arrive at an interpretation that STRATCOM’s role is one of an integrator of missile defense, while the regional combatant commanders will have command and control over missile defense assets.

This approach to delineating responsibility for conducting missile defense is based on the principle of centralized planning and decentralized execution. As one senior defense official put it:

UCP 2002 addresses the missile defense command and control issue through the use of centralized planning with decentralized execution. Therefore, while STRATCOM will be given responsibility for planning, integrating, and coordinating global missile defense operations, NORTHCOM and other regional combatant commands will retain

⁸ White House, “National Security Presidential Directive 23: National Policy on Ballistic Missile Defense”, 16 December 2002. <<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-23.htm>> 20 January 2005

⁹ US Army Space and Missile Defense Command, Space and Ballistic Missile Defense Forces, <<http://www.smdc.army.mil/FactSheets/SBMDF.pdf>> 20 January 2005.

¹⁰ White House, Unified Command Plan 2002: Change 2, 30 January 2003.

responsibility for defending their geographic areas of responsibility – including command and control over systems providing defense against ballistic missile attacks.¹¹

This approach brings certain advantages and disadvantages, which are discussed in further detail later. At this point it is only necessary to point out that the global perspective of missile defense is only being applied in the planning process. There are two factors involved. One is the issue of regional focus versus functional focus, while the other is the issue of speed of execution. This second issue, speed of execution, is of supreme importance because missile defense engagements are so quick that there is insufficient time to go through multiple command layers for an engagement decision.

The current approach has NORTHCOM as the responsible entity for defending the United States against ballistic missile attack. To conduct this mission the GMD interceptors that belong to SMDC, STRATCOM's Army Component, are under NORTHCOM's OPCON. While the NPR and NSPD-23 seem to call for moving beyond Cold War thinking, giving NORTHCOM the missile defense mission hearkens back to Cold War ways of doing business. Prior to 2001, the entity that traditionally had responsibility for missile defense of the United States was North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Under UCP 02, the commander of NORTHCOM is dual-hatted as the commander-in-chief of NORAD so it is little surprise that he inherited this historical responsibility.

Further contributing to the “this is the way we’ve always done it” thinking is joint doctrine. Much of the relevant joint doctrine for missile defense of the United States was written prior to 2002 but it perfectly supports the structure outlined in Change 2 to UCP

¹¹ J.D. Crouch, “United States Missile Defense Policy”, Senate Armed Services Committee, 18 March 2003, p.11

02. Joint Publication 3-0.1, Aerospace Defense of North America, clearly identifies that “the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) is responsible for aerospace defense of North America.”¹² As of yet there is no doctrine to supercede Joint Publication 3-01.5, Joint Theater Air and Missile Defense, which helps perpetuate the distinction between *national* missile defense and *theater* missile defense that was artificially imposed by the ABM Treaty. This is not to say that all joint doctrine on missile defense is outdated or inappropriate, but rather to highlight the impact of historical precedent.

This retention of historical precedent may not fully meet the intent of the current Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld. Merging SPACECOM and STRATCOM, in 2002, was supposed to improve combat effectiveness. “The missions of SpaceCom and StratCom have evolved to the point where merging the two into a single entity will eliminate redundancies in the command structure and streamline the decision-making process.”¹³ Unfortunately this is not the case. NORAD did not merge into the new STRATCOM, going instead to NORTHCOM. This means the redundant command structures for missile defense remain and the decision-making process is not streamlined.

As was mentioned previously, NSPD-23 answers the question “what is missile defense”, but it does so at the strategic level. Joint doctrine provides an operational-level answer to that question. Missile defense is a subset counterair operations as defined in Joint Publication 3-01: Joint Doctrine for Countering Air and Missile Threats. This document illuminates a second disconnect in policy. While some comments of defense

¹² U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-01.1: Aerospace Defense of North America, (Washington DC: 4 November 1996), II-2.

¹³ Unattributed, “DOD Announces Merger Of U.S. Space And Strategic Commands”, Space Daily, 26 June 2002. < <http://www.spacedaily.com/news/milspace-02s.html> > 20 January 2005

officials reinforce the doctrinal concept of *centralized planning and decentralized execution*, this concept rests on an assumption of uncertainty and disorder on the battlefield which is best handled by giving subordinates freedom to act as local circumstances dictate. The NPR, on the other hand, with its discussion of “exquisite” intelligence and robust C2, assumes strategic deterrent forces will have the necessary resources to overcome uncertainty and disorder. In other words, we can do better than decentralized execution.

The third disconnect in missile defense policy involves the integration of offense and defense. IMD’s intent is to combine theater missile defense (TMD) and national missile defense (NMD) with attack operations, layered defenses and battle management systems.¹⁴ This combination of offense and defense is a key feature of the New Triad yet it creates some conflict within the Department of Defense (DoD). “Placing responsibilities for elements of both strategic defense and strategic offense under a single command (STRATCOM) flies in the face of a very longstanding understanding within the US military that these two are better kept apart.”¹⁵ While Change 2 to UCP 02 assigns integration of missile defense and Global Strike to STRATCOM, the reality is that defense has been handed off to the regional combatant commanders for execution. “Missile defense is a responsibility of all of our regional combatant commands.”¹⁶ Even STRATCOM’s mission statement says that it will “establish and provide full-spectrum global strike” while IMD is listed as an item it provides in support to the regional

¹⁴ Association of the United States Army, “Space and Missile Defense Challenges”, AUSA Background Brief #91, (Alexandria, VA: December 2001), p.3 < <http://www.ausa.org/ilw> > 20 January 2005

¹⁵ Joseph T. Jockel, “Four US Military Commands”, Institute for Research on Public Policy, (Montreal: 2003), p.11 <www.irpp.org> 20 January 2005

¹⁶ Myers, p.13

combatant commanders.¹⁷ This leaves us with the situation that no single commander is responsible for executing both strategic offense and defense.

III. Space, Time and Force Considerations

Our plans for missile defense are also shaped by space, time and force factors. In some cases those factors have constrained our action. One such constraint is the need to build the command and control infrastructure on top of the existing missile warning system.¹⁸ All missile warning sensors currently feed into the Cheyenne Mountain Operations Center (CMOC). In large part because of this infrastructure constraint, the Command and Control Battle Management and Communications (C2BMC) system now connects the CMOC with the GMD Brigade in Colorado Springs and the GMD Battalion in Alaska.¹⁹ The fact that STRATCOM headquarters is in Omaha may help explain why Change 2 to UCP 02 only gave it an integrating and coordinating task with respect to missile defense. This infrastructure constraint has also created the hypocrisy of STRATCOM personnel working within CMOC to support NORAD.²⁰

Another constraint is the NORAD agreement itself. Canada is not a participant in missile defense with the US (though Canada has agreed its personnel will provide missile defense-related information from the Integrated Tactical Warning and Attack Assessment (ITW/AA) to NORTHCOM).²¹ If Canada does agree to participate in missile defense the

¹⁷ US Army Space and Missile Defense Command mission available at <www.smdc.army.mil> 20 January 2005

¹⁸ COL D.S. Higgins, "Pragmatic Partnership", Canadian Forces College, 4 June 2004. <<http://198.231.69.12/papers/nssc6/higgins.doc>> 20 January 2005

¹⁹ Kadish, p.10

²⁰ CDR David Steele, "A View From the Mountain" in Continental Security and US-Canada Relations, (Centre for Foreign Policy Studies: 2003), p. 93 <www.dal.ca/~centre/pdf/spc03steele.pdf> 20 January 2005

²¹ Mercedes Stephenson, "Canadian Participation in Ground Based Ballistic Missile Defence in an Era of Uncertainty", CDAI-CDFAI 7th Annual Graduate Student Symposium, RMC, October 29-30, 2004, p.15 <www.cda-cdai.ca/symposia/2004/Stephenson,%20Mercedes-Paper.pdf> 20 January 2005

most expeditious way to integrate them is through NORAD. Canada is averse to dealing with US nuclear capabilities and having to work with STRATCOM may not be agreeable to Canadian domestic opinion. If Canada changes its mind on providing ITW/AA data to NORTHCOM, then the BMDS system would be put at risk or the US would have to essentially dissolve NORAD.²²

The NORAD issue raises other questions about executing the President's intent to develop international cooperation in missile defense. "In missile defense, decisionmaking gets complicated within multi-national coalitions with each nation providing their own systems, sharing sensors, and trying to make joint decisions."²³ While speed of execution is everything in missile defense, relations with international partners do not always facilitate this. For example, a joint U.S. - Japan system would therefore need to establish the rules of engagement and command authorities well before any BMDS was deployed.²⁴

Missile defense with NATO and European allies needs to be considered carefully as well. Despite alliances and other agreements, in most cases, other nations still retain sovereignty over their forces. "If there are today francophone lesbians flying CF-18s out of Bagotville, Quebec or Cold Lake, Alberta on North American air defence missions, NORAD could not say anything about it."²⁵

Other space, time and force considerations are important for answering questions regarding who retains weapon release authority, who decides fire distribution, and who

²² Steele, p.95

²³ Jim East, "IMPLICATIONS OF A JAPANESE BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM", p. 7 <cns.miis.edu/pubs/dc/track2/4th/east.pdf> 20 January 2005

²⁴ Ibid. p.8

²⁵ Jockel, p.2

makes the decision about non-nuclear strikes.²⁶ ICBM's launched at the United States generally are in boost phase for four minutes, midcourse for thirty minutes and in the terminal phase for less than a minute. This means GMD interceptors have to be on alert in order to have enough reaction time, but it does allow time for NORAD to conduct an ITW/AA and to consult with higher authority before giving an order to launch an interceptor. This is not the case for a boost-phase interceptor. A system such as the Airborne Laser (ABL) that attacks ICBMs in their boost phase may have only a matter of seconds to make a decision to fire. In this particular case weapon release authority would have to be delegated to the commander of the aircraft or at least to the commander of the operations center that is controlling the ABL.

The GMD is based in Alaska but can provide coverage for most of North America. This places them within the joint NORTHCOM/PACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). Boost phase interceptors must be very close to the launch point to be effective. For a North Korean threat a boost phase interceptor would have to be based in South Korea (for land-based interceptors) or on patrol off North Korea's coast (for airborne interceptors). This would place them clearly within the PACOM AOR. An ABL providing coverage for Europe against an Iranian missile launch might have to fly in United States Central Command (CENTCOM) airspace over Iraq (depending on launch locations).

Many of the sensors associated with BMDS are fixed, land-based radars but they are supplemented with US Navy ships that have SPY-1D radar systems which are modified to track ballistic missiles. Because an ICBM from North Korea would fly a

²⁶ M. Elaine Bunn, "Deploying Missile Defense: Major Operational Challenges", Institute for National Strategic Studies: Strategic Forum #209, (Washington: August 2004), pp. 2-3

different track if it were launched at Hawaii instead of Los Angeles, a ship in the Sea of Japan could only be positioned to cover one of the approaches.²⁷

The limited number of components that make up the BMDS are a critical force consideration. There are only six GMD interceptors in Alaska and four are scheduled to be placed at Vandenburg AFB in California. There are only 15 Aegis-equipped ships that have the modified SPY-1D radar. In the next year there will be only three ships equipped with SM-3 missiles for mid-course intercept of Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBM). There is only one ABL and it has not yet conducted a full power airborne test. All together, these small numbers of BMDS assets mean fire control and distribution is extremely important since the US cannot afford to waste a shot.

IV. The Case for a New Operational Command Structure

The major feature of the BMDS is that it is a layered system which provides multiple shot opportunities while ensuring an efficient selection of weapons to defeat a threat missile attack. The C2 defined by Change 2 to UCP 02 creates unnecessary seams between various layers. “When there are multiple types of defensive elements, including those that could engage the threat missile in boost or ascent phase, a single global commander might execute more effectively all the types of defenses that could defend the United States or another theater.”²⁸ This section proposes a structure that moves the seam into a less critical area of the missile defense function.

The North Korean missile scenario proposed at the beginning of this paper demonstrated the current C2 structure would involve three combatant commanders in defeating missile threats from a single source. This approach is inimical to the concept of

²⁷ Lisbeth Gronlund et. al., “Technical Realities”, Union of Concerned Scientists, (Cambridge, MA: May 2004), p.36

²⁸ Bunn, p.4

unity of command and the resultant unity of effort.²⁹ “Unity of command means all forces operate under a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces employed in pursuit of a common purpose.”³⁰

A more appropriate structure to achieve unity of command would be one where all elements of the BMDS are under the responsibility of one combatant commander. Since this is a functional approach to the missile defense problem, the most appropriate command would be STRATCOM. This would entail a change to UCP 02 to stipulate STRATCOM is responsible for providing integrated missile defense support to regional combatant commanders. Such an approach is supported by joint doctrine on command: “Sometimes a joint force based solely on military functions without respect to a specific geographic region is more suitable to fix responsibility for certain types of continuing operations...When defining functional responsibilities, the focus should be on the effect desired or the service provided.”³¹ Joint doctrine also recommends that “the commander will assign overall responsibility for air defense to a single commander. Normally, this will be the component commander with the preponderance of air defense capability and the command, control, and communications capability to plan and execute integrated air defense operations. Finally, “functions and responsibilities...will be carried out in such a manner as to achieve...coordination of Armed Forces operations to promote efficiency and economy to prevent gaps in responsibility.”³²

²⁹ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 0-2: Unified Action Armed Forces, (Washington DC: 10 July 2001), III-1.

³⁰ Ibid, III-1

³¹ Ibid, V-2

³² Ibid, II-2

This approach would mean STRATCOM assets may be operating within the AOR of a regional combatant commander (RCC). Once again joint doctrine supports such an approach: “The missions or tasks assigned to the commander of a functional command may require certain installations and activities of that commander be exempt, partially or wholly, from the command authority of an area commander.”³³ The precedent has also been set by other functional combatant commands like United Special Operations Command (SOCOM) or United States Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) that operate within the AORs of RCCs.

One constraint noted earlier is the limitation of C2 infrastructure imposed by legacy threat warning systems. Fortunately, the C2BMC system for missile defense was conceived as a global system, so it is in the process of being installed at STRATCOM, NORTHCOM and PACOM with all systems in place by 2005.³⁴ This will ensure a common operating picture and permit STRATCOM to exercise command and control over the GMD interceptors that belong to SMDC. The C2BMC should be integrated with the STRATCOM Global Operations Center (GOC).

The GOC and its supporting command elements will enable the US Strategic Command to provide responsive support to the President, Secretary of Defense, Combatant Commanders, and agencies. Additionally, the GOC, with support of our components, will develop and leverage global battlefield situational awareness and present decision makers with full spectrum courses of action that integrate all US Strategic Command’s missions and capabilities.³⁵

Another constraint, that is imposed by NORAD considerations, may be averted by giving missile defense to STRATCOM. Following the 1972 ABM Treaty, the United

³³ Ibid, V-2

³⁴ ADM James Ellis, Jr., “Missile Defense”, Senate Armed Services Committee, 11 March 2004, p.7

³⁵ ADM James Ellis, Jr. “Strategic Deterrence and Strategic Capabilities”, Senate Armed Services Committee, 24 March 2004, pp. 19-20.

States activated (for a brief period) a missile defense system in North Dakota. By moving missile defense out of NORTHCOM, NORAD can move forward with defense against aircraft. Admittedly, if Canada later requests to participate in missile defense, it may be difficult to overcome issues regarding contact with STRATCOM given its nuclear strike mission. This may also be a sticking point for other missile defense participants. It will also create friction with the RCCs and their responsibilities for security assistance.

To be truly effective, STRATCOM must have combatant command (COCOM) authority over BMDS components. This will mean the GMD system in Alaska will remain under SMDC but NORTHCOM will lose OPCON. When ABL and SM-3 capable ships become operational, they should also be under OPCON of STRATCOM, much like Trident ballistic missile submarines. Items that are multi-role, like Aegis ships providing missile surveillance, need not be under COCOM of STRATCOM. PACOM should retain OPCON of those ships in the Sea of Japan with the express understanding that STRATCOM is the supported commander for conducting missile defense.³⁶

This approach to missile defense improves the integration of offense and defense in defeating missile threats. This approach would give the authority, responsibility, and resources for missile defense to one commander. The Secretary of Defense would have only one call to make to receive integrated, synchronized proposals for deterring attack.

This combined approach has proved successful on a smaller scale in the past. The first example is in the Korean theater of operations. In 1999 “missile-defense responsibilities in Korea were spread between several component staffs and service-specific organizations. This situation produced confusion, lacked unity of effort, and

³⁶ Ellis, “Missile Defense”, pp. 6-7

contributed to needless friction and inefficiency. Additionally, these organizations lacked the proper structure and resources for the execution of TMD.”³⁷ The answer to the problem was the creation of a combined and joint theater-missile operations cell (CJTMOC) that brought together elements of the joint staff, the service components, and other missile defense players into one organization.³⁸ This organization brought together the various capabilities such as active defenses, attack operations and intelligence into one synchronized activity even though some elements were physically dispersed over thousands of miles.³⁹

A second successful example is missile defense efforts of CENTCOM in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Missile defense operations were centered around an Army entity known as the 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command (AAMDC). Unlike Operation Desert Storm (ODS), where the Army component for missile defense was primarily defensive, in OIF there was a true balance of offense and defense.⁴⁰ “Approximately thirty percent of the staff, to include the G3 and a preponderance of the G2 and attack operations personnel, were located in the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC), Prince Sultan Air Base (PSAB).”⁴¹ This commitment to making missile defense a balanced, joint effort provided big dividends. In OIF, the joint force scored kills on Iraqi mobile missile launchers with attack operations - perhaps the first time this was accomplished in the history of warfare.⁴²

³⁷ COL Dale Eikmeier, “Organizing for Success”, Aerospace Power Journal, Fall 2001
<<http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj01/fal01/eikmeier.html>> 20 January 2005

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command, Operation Iraqi Freedom History, (FT Bliss, TX: September 2003), p.104

⁴¹ Ibid, p. vii

⁴² Ibid, p.35

In terms of principles of war, this proposed change of BMDS assets to STRATCOM provides a distinct advantage. It not only achieves true unity of command by aligning BMDS assets under one headquarters, but also aligns offensive and defensive forces together in concert as envisioned in the NPR. This concentration yields advantages in the ability to mass resources when and where they are needed as well as providing for economy of force. This structure gives the proponent for missile defense the ability to employ offensive and maneuver and to achieve surprise. Unity of command in this case also yields simplicity in what is already an extremely complex system. By having control of all missile defense forces, they can be directed towards a single objective. The one area of potential weakness is that of security. With a global perspective, the STRATCOM commander may not have the ability to focus on individual threats with the same intensity as a RCC.

V. Maintaining the Status Quo

An alternative course of action is to maintain the status quo. This is supported by current policy documents and portions of joint doctrine as previously discussed. This course of action proceeds on the joint doctrine principle that “all components of the Department of Defense are charged to coordinate on matters of common or overlapping responsibility.”⁴³ While it may not achieve unity of command in the classic sense, “this concept of operations also achieves unity of effort by placing under US Strategic Command the overarching responsibility for Global Ballistic Missile Defense. US Strategic Command synchronizes and integrates all combatant commanders’ Ballistic Missile Defense plans into a fully coordinated, cohesive Global Ballistic Missile Defense

⁴³ Joint Pub 0-2, I-9

strategy. The concept is designed to minimize operational vulnerabilities, mitigate risk, and appropriately set and prioritize resource requirements from a global perspective.”⁴⁴

STRATCOM has taken a step to enhance the effectiveness of the current approach by creating a joint functional component command (JFCC) for Integrated Missile Defense. It has named SMDC as the JFCC for IMD with a mission to: “Integrate and globally synchronize missile defense plans to dissuade attacks; optimize layered missile defense in depth and recommend strike packages to meet strategic objectives.”⁴⁵ An important feature is SMDC’s ability to leverage the C2BMC system. Once full connectivity with RCCs is achieved, dynamic re-tasking of the BMDS system will be possible. It may be OPCON to NORTHCOM but upon heightened tensions in a region OPCON could be immediately passed to another RCC based on existing plans.

The current approach is more conducive to intelligence and general awareness of threats in a particular region. STRATCOM is heavily dependent upon RCCs for situational awareness.⁴⁶ Delegation of assets to RCCs is also more conducive to boost-phase intercept operations. They have the necessary local situational awareness and are better able to set procedural firing guidance. The current approach is more effective in conducting offensive operations. While STRATCOM brings important capabilities to kinetic and non-kinetic strikes, the RCCs also have important capabilities, especially in the ability to provide support and intelligence. This is an active area of work for STRATCOM with its partners at PACOM and NORTHCOM.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Ellis, “Missile Defense”, pp. 5-6

⁴⁵ COL Jeffrey Horne, “Global Missile Defense” presentation for AUSA Conference (El Paso, TX: 8 December 2004)

⁴⁶ House Armed Services Committee, “Hearing on the National Defense Act of 2004”, 13 March 2004, p.42

⁴⁷ Ellis, “Missile Defense”, p.8

In terms of principles of war, the status quo sacrifices unity of command and relies on cooperation of multiple combatant commands to achieve mass, objective, maneuver, economy of force and surprise. In some respects its ability or offensive is limited in scope but more effective when it is applied. It offers increased security but at the cost of higher risk of a threat falling through the seam between RCCs.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

The current configuration of missile defenses to protect the United States creates unnecessary risk that an attack will be successful. The GMD interceptors in Alaska, Airborne Lasers, and Aegis ships at sea are all designed to work together as a layered system to ensure a high probability of kill against enemy ballistic missiles. The decision to launch and how to control the fire of very limited resources must be centrally controlled to ensure efficient use. The short timelines to make decisions on engagement also dictate a chain of command that is as short as possible. As it stands now, pieces of the BMDS are being operated without synchronization.

The solution to this problem is to change the mission of STRATCOM as outlined in UCP 02. STRATCOM should be tasked to provide integrated missile defense support to regional combatant commanders. All BMDS elements should be under COCOM of STRATCOM, much like our nuclear deterrent forces. Supporting and supported relationships should be used to define the interaction of STRATCOM and other combatant commands for missile defense. It is important that it always retain OPCON of all BMDS elements to ensure their synchronized and efficient employment.

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