# Trump, announcing new missile defense program, ramps up nuclear arms race

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**19 January 2019**

Speaking at the Pentagon Thursday, President Donald Trump announced the largest expansion of US missile defense forces since Ronald Reagan's failed "Star Wars" program.

The announcement is the latest move in a global nuclear arms race in which the United States, Russia and China are rapidly expanding their nuclear arsenals, even as the Trump administration moves to tear up all restrictions on the development, deployment and use of nuclear weapons.

Trump has accelerated a $1 trillion nuclear modernization program put in place under Obama, while rushing the development of new US strategic bombers, nuclear submarines and "low-yield" nuclear weapons that are more likely to be used in combat.

At the same time, the White House has announced the United States' intention to withdraw from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty as it prepares to ring Russia and China with short- and medium-range nuclear and conventional missiles.

While US missile defense strategy previously claimed to defend against the actions of smaller states such as North Korea and Iran, this year's missile defense review more directly targets Russia and China. As the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) think tank wrote, "For the first time, the document puts Russia and China in the same sentence as missile defenses, making explicit what has hitherto been implicit."

Speaking at the Pentagon Thursday, Trump declared that "foreign adversaries, competitors and rogue regimes are steadily enhancing their missile arsenals… Their arsenals are getting bigger and stronger."

Trump's remarks echoed the themes of the Pentagon report he was presenting. "Military superiority is not a birthright," the report states. "The scale and urgency of change required to renew our conventional and missile defense overmatch should not be underestimated."

The report goes on to threaten: "To our competitors: We see what you are doing, and we are taking action."

Congress has approved $10.3 billion for the US missile defense agency this fiscal year, a figure that is poised to skyrocket if Trump's plans are carried through.

In his Pentagon appearance, Trump did not attempt to hide the fact that he was using the prospect of billions of dollars in additional military funding to solicit political support. Responding to applause as he took the podium, Trump told the military audience, "You're only doing that because I gave you the greatest and biggest budget in our history. And I've now done it two times. And I hate to tell the rest of the world, but I'm about to do it three times. So that's the only reason you gave me such a nice welcome."

Despite the bitter factional warfare in Washington, there is overwhelming bipartisan agreement on the vast and perpetual expansion of the military. Last June, the Senate approved, on an 85-10 vote, an $82 billion increase in the Pentagon budget, bringing annual spending to $716 billion. The colossal levels of military spending are almost never discussed in the media and the money is appropriated without question.

The diversion of funds into military appropriations and the pockets of defense contractors is even more shameless in connection with missile defense than with other types of military spending, because the efficacy of missile defense is, according to experts, largely illusory.

Missile defense is "the longest running scam in the history of the Department of Defense," wrote Joseph Cirincione, president of the Ploughshares Fund, and "the new Missile Defense Review continues that proud

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tradition."

Since President Reagan first announced his "Star Wars" initiative, the United States has spent some $300 billion on missile defense systems. Cirincione observed that "a decade after the start of 'Star Wars,' having spent tens of billions of dollars on X-ray lasers, directed energy weapons, particle-beam weapons, space-based kinetic interceptors and 'brilliant pebbles,' the Pentagon was forced to conclude that none of these fanciful concepts would work. We ended up with a concept of limited, ground-based interceptors that might be able to intercept one or two primitive long-range warheads."

But the extremely limited effectiveness of the US missile defense systems did not prevent Trump from making sweeping claims about US capabilities. "Our goal is simple: to ensure that we can detect and destroy any missile launched against the United States anywhere, anytime, anyplace," he said.

"We will destroy every type of missile attack against any American target, whether before or after launch," he added.

In reality, current US missile defenses are not capable of reliably destroying modern ICBMs possessed by Russia or China, much less the new generation of hypersonic reentry vehicles that the two countries are deploying.

Trump's statements reflect the two most essential characteristics of American military policy since the fall of the Soviet Union: boundless, often delusional, hubris and a total lack of restraint. Given the series of blank checks Congress keeps writing, it is likely that Trump's announcement will be the start of a new "Star Wars" boondoggle—turning over hundreds of billions more dollars for fanciful proposals.

However, the dubious efficacy of these initiatives does not lessen their deadly implications. The entire program is part of accelerating preparations for nuclear war, in which US imperialism is preparing to use offensive nuclear weapons.

For all the money Trump's new missile defense system will consume, the primary mechanism for ensuring that no missiles reach the United States in the event of war is the threat to destroy the entire landmass of a potential opponent with nuclear weapons. "The United States will continue to rely upon nuclear deterrence for strategic nuclear attack from major powers," the CSIS declares.

The central aim of the Trump administration's Nuclear Posture Review, released last year, was to de-stigmatize the use of nuclear weapons by expanding the range of possible scenarios in which the president could respond with a nuclear strike.

As numerous studies have made clear, a nuclear exchange between the United States and Russia or between the United States and China, beyond an initial death toll in the hundreds of millions, would result in a climatological phenomenon known as nuclear winter, entailing a long-term drop in global temperatures that would make agriculture impossible and wipe out the entire human race.

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