

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 12, 2013

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to express our concern over the failure of the recent intercept test of the ground-based midcourse defense (GMD) system – the only *national missile defense system* in place to protect the American people. This is the third intercept test failure in a row – and now involves both capability enhancement versions of the Exo-atmospheric Kill Vehicle (EKV) – since the system was last successfully tested in December 2008.

While it may take some time to reach a final diagnosis of the cause of the July 5th test failure, it is already clear that President Obama’s decision to drastically cut funding for the GMD program since he came to office and to “curtail additional GMD development,”^[1] has drained funding available to conduct needed tests of this system. Since the successful 2008 GMD test, there have been only three attempted intercept tests and two flight tests conducted in over four and one-half years. In fact, the version of the EKV tested on July 5th hadn’t been tested for almost five years.

Indeed, one need only reflect that in 2008, funding for GMD was just over \$2 billion, whereas by 2012, GMD was reduced to just half that total and continues to decline over the next five years. Such funding cuts have touched every facet of the GMD program, including its maintenance.

The Administration gambled with the U.S. national missile defense system by hoping the SM-3 block IIB interceptor would be a replacement for the GMD system – and lost, it turns out. In essence, GMD appears to have been put on “life support” under the Obama Administration’s budget requests. Indeed, cancellation of the Multiple Kill Vehicle (MKV) program in 2009 meant there were no plans to modernize the ground-based interceptor in any meaningful sense.

In fact, even relatively inexpensive solutions to make the GMD system more effective, such as the upgrade to a “shout-back” capability, which is essential for maximizing multiple engagement opportunities, was overlooked. Even now, amidst advances by North Korea and Iran to hold the United States at risk from long-range ballistic missile attacks, the Administration refuses to support the East Coast missile defense site and instead suggests other options may be able to deliver some improved GMD capability, yet those options aren’t even reflected in the MDA budget requests.

^[1] Fiscal Year 2010 Department of Defense *Budget Overview for the Missile Defense Agency*, p.10.

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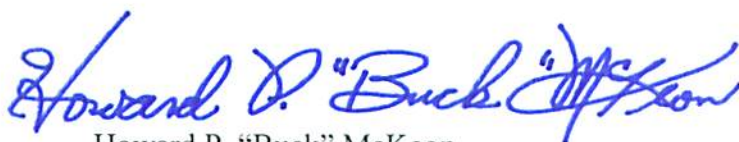
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The Department of Defense, at the prompting of Congress, is now considering a next generation kill vehicle for the ground-based interceptor. Regardless of the causes of the recent flight test failures, we encourage you to make the development and deployment of a new kill vehicle one of your highest priorities, especially in light of your recent announcement to deploy an additional 14 ground-based interceptors in Alaska to address the growing threat from North Korea. We must continue to advance the national missile defense capability, even as we ensure the existing capability meets the highest levels of reliability.

Additionally, we believe it is imperative that the Missile Defense Agency conduct, as soon as practicable, a new intercept test of the CE-1 Enhanced Kill Vehicle GBI. We believe such a test should occur in 2013 to ensure there is no question about the capability and credibility of the GMD system – our only national missile defense capability. We are in agreement with LTG Richard Formica, the head of Army Space and Missile Defense Command and the Joint Functional Command for Integrated Missile Defense who recently stated that it is important to "re-test as soon as feasible."

In closing, we seek your assurance that defending the American people against long-range missile threats remains the top missile defense priority of the United States. Additionally, we ask the Director, Missile Defense Agency provide us, as soon as possible, an action plan to resolve the cause of the failure of the recent missile defense test, conduct a new intercept test of that system, and to provide a clear roadmap for the development and fielding of a next generation kill vehicle for the GMD system that will be required to stay ahead of the long-range ballistic missile threats to the United States.

Sincerely,



Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee



James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee



Mike Rogers
Chairman
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces



Jeff Sessions
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces