

Missile defence shield is a fraud, so it must be about the money

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It sure sounds like it is about the military-industrial establishment leveraging some profit out of a culture of fear. Whether or not this technology works is irrelevant to the momentum behind this.

As quoted in this *CanWest* News article a top scientist who blew the whistle on the earlier failures of the Patriot missile states, "*The U.S. missile defence shield is so technically unsound, it will never be capable of protecting North America from attack,* ... " --

Space & Technology Editor

Defence shield 'a fraud'

Can be easily defeated, scientist says. Liberal government is reportedly on verge of consenting to multibillion-dollar system

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CanWest News Service

<http://www.canada.com/montreal/montrealgazette/soundoff/story.html?id=e5cdebc6-c088-4f3e-adcf-8635631b34bd>

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The U.S. missile defence shield is so technically unsound, it will never be capable of protecting North America from attack, said a top scientist who blew the whistle on the earlier failures of the Patriot missile.

Theodore Postol, a former science adviser to the U.S. chief of naval operations, said the missile defence shield the Martin government is considering joining is totally unproved and faces so many technical hurdles that to claim it can protect the continent from attack is "scientific fraud."

Postol, a professor of science, technology and national security at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said one of the main problems with the shield is it is incapable of distinguishing between a real warhead and the decoys that would be carried by an incoming missile.

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"This is one of the biggest engineering jokes in the history of humankind. It's a fake," said Postol, who is in Ottawa today to meet with MPs and will be giving a public lecture on missile defence tomorrow.

During the first Persian Gulf War, he blew the whistle on military claims that the Patriot missile destroyed almost all of the Iraqi Scud rockets fired during the war. The Pentagon launched an investigation into whether the scientist had violated national security, but Postol was later vindicated by several U.S. government studies that noted the Patriot was successful less than 10 per cent of the time.

Postol has conducted a similar analysis on the U.S. missile defence shield, which will use ground-based interceptor rockets to shoot down incoming warheads. U.S. President George W. Bush has made missile defence one of his administration's priorities and he is expected to declare the system ready to go in the coming months.

The Liberal government is reportedly on the verge of signing on to the multibillion-dollar system and Prime Minister Paul Martin and Defence Minister Bill Graham are among the strong supporters in the party of the plan. Other Liberal MPs, however, have voiced concerns the shield will not work and will pave the way for weapons in space.

Postol warns the shield can be easily defeated by standard decoys that would be carried by an incoming missile. In that case, the missile would release dozens of mylar balloons that would confuse the sensors on the shield's interceptor. Any nation capable of building a missile that could hit North America would have the technology to outfit it with decoys, he noted.

Also, the shield's interceptor "kill vehicle" has never been tested with the rockets that are to carry it to its target. The limited number of tests that have been carried out on the shield's interceptors have been scripted to the point where the system has been fed the co-ordinates of the incoming warhead it is expected to hit. Even then, some of those tests have been failures, Postol noted.

Missile defence agency officials in the U.S., however, have expressed confidence the shield will work. The Bush administration has argued even a rudimentary system is better than nothing.

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Government officials and Canadian Forces officers have warned Canada cannot afford not to take part in the missile shield. They have voiced concerns the U.S. could retaliate politically or proceed with security matters on their own, cutting Canada out of decisions on continental security.

But Postol said in terms of North American security, the U.S. needs Canada as many of the key air defence radars that protect the continent are located on Canadian territory.

"The United States needs Canada just as much or more than Canada needs the United States in these matters," he said. "The Canadians have a lot of leverage if they choose to use it."

The missile shield is designed to counter a small-scale attack by countries such as North Korea or Iran, as well as accidental missile launches by Russia and China.

But Postol said it is unlikely North Korea can build a nuclear-tipped missile capable of reaching North America. More worrisome is the possibility the North Koreans could place a crude nuclear weapon aboard a ship and sail it into a U.S. port, he noted.

Postol suggested instead of spending billions of dollars on the missile shield, the U.S. should shore up its continental security.

Postol's concerns are echoed by a group of 49 retired American generals and admirals. In March, the officers wrote Bush recommending the billions of dollars to be spent on missile defence should be redirected to combating nuclear terrorism, the most pressing threat facing the U.S. today.

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