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Lt. General Obering's Oral Statement to the House Committee on Government Oversight and Reform

Washington, DC – 30 April 2008

Lt. General Obering: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Rep Shays, and to the other distinguished members of the committee. As Director of the Missile Defense Agency, it is my role to develop, test and initially field an integrated, layered ballistic missile defense system. I want to emphasize the integrated and layered nature of these capabilities which our critics overlook and which I will expand on later.

I'm happy to report that 2007 was the best year we've ever had, and it reflects the hard work of thousands of men and women around the country. This past year, we've made progress in our fielding and testing and have taken major steps to defend our homeland and our deployed forces and allies in the Pacific. With NATO's recent recognition of the emerging missile threat by all of its member nations, its' endorsement of our long-range defense proposals, and its tasking to propose options for shorter range protection, we will be able to defend our deployed forces and allies in that important theater. In addition, we have active cooperation efforts with 18 nations worldwide.

Our success to date is also reflected in our increasingly complex and realistic test program which we will continue to expand over the next several years. With the 10 of 10 successful intercepts in 2007, we have now achieved 34 of 42 successful hit-to-kill intercepts since 2001. We have not had a major system failure in our flight test program in over three years. Two relatively recent milestones are worth highlighting. One was the success of our allied partner, Japan, in their first intercept flight test off the coast of Hawaii in December and while it was not a test of our missile defense system, we were able to modify our sea-based element to destroy the errant satellite in February with just six weeks' notice.

Now I would like to address some of the critics' opinions. The fact is many of our critics disagree with the *policy choice* that we ought to deploy strategic or tactical systems to counter the ballistic missile threat. They have other approaches to include denying that the threat exists or using more destabilizing or destructive solutions.

In pursuing missile defense, even in a limited fashion, we are following a common sense approach. To illustrate, let me quote a recently declassified draft Presidential memorandum:

A number of arguments for deployment of a less than perfect ballistic missile defense are most persuasive:

a. A ballistic missile defense even though of limited capability could be very effective against a simple attack by a minor power, a small accidental attack, or a small attack constrained by arms control measures. Such a defense would contribute to the deterrence of blackmail threats and to the stability of an arms control agreement.

b. A ballistic missile defense of limited capability would contribute to the deterrence of large attacks by raising doubt about the attacker's ability to penetrate. Such a defense, even though limited, greatly complicates the design and tactics for offensive weapons.¹

The Memorandum was written 45 years ago, on October 6, 1962.² The president was John F. Kennedy.

¹ *Id.* at 5 (quoted text was declassified on Feb. 27, 2008).

² Nine days later, on October 15th, 1962, a U-2 aircraft discovered nuclear-capable SS-4s in Cuba.

Citing a similar logic, the Congress passed and the Clinton Administration signed into law the National Missile Defense Act of 1999.

What we have seen from our critics is an attack on the overall policy to deploy a missile defense using technical arguments – stating originally that we can't do hit-to-kill, or now that we can't be effective against countermeasures or that in the future, we can't make boost phase defenses work.

But the fact is that we can do hit-to-kill, we can be effective against countermeasures and we are making boost phase defenses work. So we are taking these technical arguments off the table one at a time through a comprehensive test program.

Our critics are also out of step with the mainstream – there has been bi-partisan support by 11 Congresses, 4 Presidents, Combatant Commanders, a growing number of allies, including all NATO nations, not to mention the majority of the American people.

Successive military commanders, such as the head of US Northern Command, testified to Congress that our long-range defenses have "made great strides" and that the system is "standing ready to defend the United States' and its allies' infrastructure and population centers, if needed." Indeed, for several years now a number of our Combatant Commanders have placed missile defense near the top of their needed capabilities list.

Defying the predictions of critics, who maintained for years that we could not hit a bullet with a bullet, MDA has shown that we can successfully do so. In fact, we have shown we can hit very precisely, within centimeters of where we are aiming.

Also, contrary to what our critics maintain, we are using realistic test criteria developed by the test community and the warfighter. The Director of Operational Test & Evaluation concurs that we have increased the operational realism of all of our testing to include an end-to-end test of our long range elements with operational assets.

Our critics claim that a threat is not realistic unless it has simple or advanced countermeasures. We take countermeasures seriously and we have tested against simple versions in the past. Our flight tests will include more complex threat suites in the future as our development program of new sensors, algorithms, and kill vehicles matures.

However, the fact remains that there are hundreds of missiles deployed today that we do not believe carry countermeasures and we have been successful against these types of threats. What would our critics have us do, return this country and our forces to its previous state of complete vulnerability to missile attack?

Missile defense must be considered within the entire balance of forces of the United States – it will complement our arms control and other dissuasive actions; it can bolster our deterrence capability, it can stabilize crisis situations, and when all else fails and a warhead is in the air, missile defense and only missile defense can save innocent lives. Now with your permission, I would like to use three charts to better illustrate what I've described. <Charts> Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

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