

**Opening Statement
Chairman John F. Tierney
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**

“Oversight of Missile Defense (Part I): Threats, Realities, and Tradeoffs.”

As Prepared for Delivery

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Good morning, and welcome to you all.

In a few short weeks – March 23rd to be exact – our country will mark the 25th anniversary of President Ronald Reagan announcing to the nation his plan to shield our country from Soviet nuclear missiles.

A lot has happened over those 25 years. Gone are the days when thousands of missiles from the Soviet Union were the immediate threat; current efforts, instead, focus on Iran and North Korea.

In 2002, President Bush withdrew our country from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Missile Defense Agency was created and exempted from normal acquisition, testing and reporting requirements.

This Subcommittee wanted to take this opportunity to take a step back, to ask what have we achieved over these past 25 years and over \$120 billion in investment – as conservatively estimated by the Congressional Research Service – and, more importantly, where we should be going in the future.

Specifically, the National Security and Foreign Affairs Subcommittee begins today a robust and concerted investigation into the rationale for missile defense; its costs, benefits and technical obstacles; and the accountability, transparency and testing regime of the Missile Defense Agency.

We thought it vital to begin this investigation with a thorough examination of the potential threat our country faces from ballistic missiles and how that threat compares to other homeland security and weapons of mass destruction vulnerabilities.

After all, a threat assessment – both with respect to ballistic missile threats specifically and comparing this threat across sectors – should be the logical foundation from which sound policy and resource judgments are made.

Unfortunately, what we largely have to date is instead a series of intelligence estimates from the 1990s that have been tossed around like political footballs.

What we seek to do with this first oversight hearing on missile defense is to have as robust and open a dialogue as possible about the threats we face with top experts who have devoted decades of their lives exploring these issues.

And we are doing so drawing on information already in the public sphere. I think it's vital that, as much as possible, we have these debates and discussions in public so that the American people can get the most accurate picture possible about what our government is up to, especially when you're talking about a program costing \$10 billion a year.

And in the spirit of the robust debate to follow today, I wanted to throw out a few thoughts to get the ball rolling.

First, what advice do our panelists have for navigating through the various intelligence estimates on intercontinental ballistic missiles threats, and what has occurred in the real world since those earlier estimates? Do we need an updated National Intelligence Estimate, and how can we achieve one that is free of political pressure or interference?

Second, when talking about a threat assessment, how important is it to differentiate between short- or medium-range missiles versus intercontinental missiles?

Third, I note with great interest a point that has been repeatedly stressed by our intelligence community over the years. In 2000, for example, Robert Walpole, then the CIA's point person on these issues, testified in Congress, and I quote:

In fact, we project that in the coming years, U.S. territory is probably more likely to be attacked with weapons of mass destruction from non-missile delivery means (most likely from non-state entities) than by missiles, primarily because non-missile delivery means are less costly and more reliable and accurate. They can also be used without attribution.

A National Intelligence Council report in 2000 entitled "Global Trends 2015" reiterated this point:

Other means to deliver WMD against the United States will emerge, some cheaper and more reliable and accurate than early-generation ICBMs. The likelihood of an attack by these means is greater than that of a WMD attack with an ICBM.

My question for our panel today is if other methods to strike the United States are A) cheaper; B) more reliable; C) more accurate; and D) provide anonymity instead of ensuring a completely devastating counterstrike by our country, is it likely that our highest priority threat against which we must protect ourselves will come from a country

that wanted to cause us harm by focusing their limited resources and expertise on the very difficult process of building, testing, and deploying an intercontinental ballistic missile with a miniaturized weapon of mass destruction as its payload?

Fourth, what are the opportunity costs of spending roughly \$10 billion a year on missile defense when this amount of funding represents a third of the total budget for the Department of Homeland Security and is roughly equal to the total appropriation for the Department of State? To break it down further, we are annually spending billions more on missile defense than the entire budget for FEMA, 20 times more than for public diplomacy, and 30 times more than for the Peace Corps.

I have no doubt that the Members of this Subcommittee and the American people will benefit from the opportunity to learn today from our witnesses and your decades of collective military, arms control, and national security experience.

I thank our witnesses for being with us today, and I look forward to your testimony.

I now yield to the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Congressman Chris Shays.