

US and UK Cooperation in Missile Defense: Strategic Reasons or Business as Usual?

by Basil Polemitis

On March 11, 2004, the director of the US Missile Defense Agency (MDA), Lt. Gen. Ronald T. Kadish, stated before the Senate Armed Services Committee that by the end of the year, the US would have “an initial missile defense capability to defeat near-term threats of greatest concern.”¹ Kadish then proceeded to add that the “forces to be placed on alert as part of the initial configuration include up to 20 ground-based interceptors at Fort Greely, Alaska and Vandenberg Air Force Base (AFB), an upgraded Cobra Dane radar on Eareckson Air Station in Alaska, and an Upgraded Early Warning Radar (UEWR) in the UK.”²

The last reference to the UK does not come as a surprise. Since 1963, the UK hosts one of the most important radar stations of the US Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS). The radar station at RAF Fylingdales, in North Yorkshire, is capable of observing missile launches and other space-based objects.

Following the end of the Cold War and the subsequent ease of tensions between the West and Russia, the Fylingdales radar, as well as the European relay ground station at Menwith Hill, remained in service. The Fylingdales radar’s importance has been substantially increased following the decision of the current US administration to proceed with a missile defense policy. The radar in the UK can provide forward-looking coverage to the US and its allies, particularly from potential threats based in the Middle East.³ In order to do so, the Fylingdales radar station needed an upgrade.

On December 17, 2002, the US requested the UK’s consent to upgrade the radar for missile defense purposes.⁴ Following a debate in the British Parliament, on February 5, 2003, the UK responded positively to the US request.⁵ In Brussels, on June 12, 2003, the US and the UK secretaries of defense signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the area of missile defense cooperation, and particularly in the domain of industrial collaboration between their respective public and private sectors. As a result, the UK established a Missile Defense Center (MDC) with the private sector in order to operate as a link between US and UK official agencies, as well as the private entities involved with the project. The UK government funds the joint public-private MDC with the amount of approximately \$8 million per year, in

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addition to a matching contribution by the UK private sector.⁶

Thus, the UK's involvement in US missile defense was established. This has been the case despite the absence of any formal debate or decision by the UK government on whether or not the UK's interests are served by this involvement. The UK decided to permit the upgrading of the Fylingdales radar and to proceed with the joint commercial cooperation with the US, but retained its right to decide, at a later stage, to pursue a missile defense.⁷

Despite this disclaimer, it becomes evident that the UK's involvement in US missile defense was primarily based on two premises. The first relates to the possible threat posed to the US and the UK by missile proliferation. Although the UK is currently not under direct threat of an enemy's missile attack, US concerns are of vital importance to the UK. The second premise relates to the industrial aspect of the UK's involvement in missile defense.⁸

The very nature of international politics surrounding US missile defense requires a more in-depth approach to identifying the general strategic framework in which the UK has been invited to play a role.

The reason for the UK's participation in US missile defense should not be viewed strictly in terms of a bargain or beneficial deal between the two countries. The very nature of international politics surrounding US missile defense requires a more in-depth approach to identifying the general strategic framework in which the UK has been invited to play a role. But is there a strategic framework in this particular case? Evidently, the usefulness of the Fylingdales radar station in missile defense provides much of the answer as to why the UK is so important to US plans. The Fylingdales radar and its forward early warning role serve the American desire to be able to identify a missile and estimate the path that will allow it to be intercepted midcourse. The anticipated US missile defense should be able to counter a missile threat during all three stages of its flight path: take off, midcourse, and descent. The Fylingdales radar is able to provide such a service, particularly in relation to the midcourse interception capability. How does this capability coincide with the current ballistic missile threat against the US and UK? What if the only credible threat stems from North Korea, several thousands of miles away, in the opposite direction of the radar?

A more thorough look at the geostrategic aspect of US missile defense leads to several questions regarding the relation between the declared scope of US policy and the actual existing threat. In other words, one must question whether the UK's involvement affects the declared US missile defense policy, particularly its scope, given that the UK radar station provides a forward presence in respect to threats emanating from the Middle East. This issue is of the essence considering the US publicly declared that its missile defense will defend the forces and territories of itself, its allies, and its friends against all classes of ballistic missile threats. At the

same time, the US will employ a limited ballistic missile defense.⁹ How does this declared policy correspond to the UK's involvement in US missile defense?

Currently, the only known credible threat against the US and its allies comes from North Korea, although it remains unclear whether North Korea has the capabilities to strike eastern parts of the US or Western Europe. Following the demise of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, it can be argued that this country does not pose a threat in the foreseeable future. Also, the Libyan decision to initiate its reengagement with the West and abandon the development of its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs leaves Iran as the only other potential threat in the Middle East.¹⁰ As a result, how does the UK's involvement in US missile defense affect US policy?

In order to explain the role of the UK in US missile defense, this paper will attempt to incorporate US missile defense in the framework of the US-UK special relationship. The first section will describe and analyze US missile defense policy. The second part will describe the US-UK special relationship and its relevance to US policy on missile defense. The last portion will attempt to explain the possible impact of the UK's involvement in US missile defense policy. Finally, this paper will attempt to reveal any other reason that leads the US to engage the UK in missile defense.

US MISSILE DEFENSE

The issue of missile defense is as old as that of the missile threat.¹¹ The US became interested in missile defense primarily after the dawn of the nuclear age and particularly after the development of ballistic missiles, especially those that were capable of carrying nuclear warheads. The nuclear weapons race between the US and the Soviet Union consumed much of the resources and attention of strategic planners in both countries, until the 1950s. At that point, following the advancements of Soviet missile technology, the US decided to explore the possibility of defending against a ballistic missile attack. The responsibility to do so was vested to the US Army, thus, turning this particular branch of the US military into the leading proponent and advocate of missile defense.¹²

However, the policy of deterrence forced the US to incorporate any thoughts concerning missile defense into the wider political framework of mutual assured destruction (MAD). This fundamental premise of the Cold War rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union led to the signing of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 1972. The ABM Treaty called for limited missile defenses for the two signatory countries and specified only two missile defense sites, one in each country, along with a specified number of interceptors, to be employed. The ABM Treaty came about after the US had successfully developed its Nike Zeus antimissile system, followed by a similar Soviet anti-aircraft defense system capable of providing limited missile defense.¹³ Despite the permission granted by the ABM Treaty for limited missile defense and the decision of the US government to employ a system for the defense of US deterrence forces, namely the missile launch facilities in the continental US amongst others, the antimissile defense site was closed down in 1976.¹⁴

On March 23, 1983, President Reagan announced his plan to develop a defense system capable of intercepting and destroying ballistic missiles before they reached their targets. This defense system, as President Reagan said, would be in accordance with the ABM Treaty obligations. It would require decades to be completed, and it would be developed while continuing the current policy of deterrence.¹⁵

The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), known by its popular name, “Star Wars,” called for a wide variety of land-based and space-based missile defense weapons. These systems included, among others, space-based lasers, space-based sensors capable of detecting missile attacks, and many other devices that were nonexistent. Most of the defense systems envisioned in “Star Wars” existed only in the minds of strategic planners and, to some extent, remained there until the end of the Reagan presidency.

The subsequent Bush administration paid less attention to “Star Wars” while continuing the research aspect of the program. The Clinton administration turned the attention of the program from an all-out National Missile Defense (NMD) system to a Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system, aimed at providing protection to US and allied forces from short-range ballistic attacks.¹⁶ The shift in policy orientation naturally resulted in a shift in spending allocated for missile defense. Between 1994 and 2001, the amount spent on Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (TBMD) was far greater than the amount spent on US NMD programs.¹⁷ By 2002, this trend was reversed.

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On May 1, 2001, President George W. Bush declared his administration’s intentions toward National Missile Defense during a speech at the National Defense University.¹⁸ In that speech, the president also expressed his desire to abandon the ABM Treaty calling it “outmoded” and irrelevant, due to the invalidity of the premise of mutually assured destruction following the end of the Cold War and the good relations between the US and Russia.

In short, a new international security framework called for a new approach to missile defense. The new international security environment is substantially different from the one that existed during the Cold War. US relations with Russia are very good. Russia, despite some of its problems, has been fully integrated into the Western security and economic structure. Through its participation at the G-8 meetings, its special relationship with NATO, and its involvement in the NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PFP) initiative, Russia is less suspicious of the US and its allies. Russia is also more concerned with the dangers that exist in its own vicinity, for example, the war in Chechnya and the activities of its former Soviet Republics.

However, the US administration’s perception of the new international security context was substantially influenced by the events of September 11, 2001. Those events led the US to revisit its National Security Strategy, particularly toward the

threat of terrorism and its perpetrators. The terrorist threat and the War on Terror required a new defense approach primarily based on low intensity warfare, clandestine operations, intelligence, and the use of highly accurate weapons. In spite of this, missile defense policy was not substantially affected by the sudden turn in US foreign policy.

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On December 13, 2001, two months after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, DC, the US withdrew from the ABM Treaty. The US abandonment of the ABM Treaty was largely viewed with resentment by US allies. While they unequivocally voiced their support for the US antiterrorism campaign and contributed their military forces in a joint operation against Afghanistan's Taliban regime, they were less inclined to endorse Bush's withdraw from the ABM Treaty. That US policy was of great concern to its allies. One would expect that the Bush administration would focus on the War on Terror by seeking the utmost multilateral support in addressing this transnational problem. On the contrary, the American withdrawal from the ABM Treaty sent strong signals to the international community, revealing some of the intentions of the Bush administration to deal with international problems.¹⁹ In essence, the US argument in favor of developing a missile defense while the War on Terror was at its highest point, forced US allies to question these intentions.

The US and the international community were particularly concerned with the ability of certain countries to develop and employ ballistic missiles. India and Pakistan had been able to launch ballistic missiles. Iraq had used short-term ballistic missiles during the Gulf War. Iran and Libya were known to be developing short- and medium-range missile capabilities. Finally, the greatest concern was North Korea. It developed considerable missile capabilities and it has been known to sell that technology to other interested parties. In addition, the existence of a North Korean nuclear program intensified these concerns. The potential ability of North Korea to launch a ballistic missile armed with nuclear warheads was of great concern to the US and several other countries in Southeast Asia.

Still, none of these concerns seemed to ease the tension caused by the US decision to leave the ABM Treaty. These tensions were greatly intensified following the release, in 2002, of the new National Security Strategy. It called for the ability of the US to engage in "preemptive attacks" against its enemies.²⁰ On the subject of the nuclear threat, the US National Security Strategy was determined to strengthen the multilateral regimes and instruments of nonproliferation of WMD and their possible delivery systems.²¹ Nevertheless, the ABM Treaty was abolished.

On December 16, 2002, the US president issued a National Security Presidential

Directive (NSPD-23) on the subject of “National Policy on Ballistic Missile Defense.”²² Building on the National Missile Defense Act of 1999 that called for the employment of a National Missile Defense system against a limited ballistic missile attack, the Bush administration proceeded to erase the distinction between NMD and TMD, thus, incorporating the two. This move was of paramount importance both for the perception of the US public and its allied nations, and for the political support to be vested in the project. Instead of continuing on the previous administrations’ approach for either a national or a theater missile defense, the Bush administration decided to eliminate the terminology and fuse the two approaches into one. By doing so, the controversy over spending associated with the long-term research and development needed for the largely “exotic” and complicated missile defense umbrella envisioned by former president Reagan was to be contained. With the new approach in place, no new long-term and difficult-to-understand concepts were needed. Similarly, the debate on whether to employ national or theater defense would stop. Moreover, the infusion of the two approaches would enable the utilization of developments in either area and incorporate them into the entire system. TMD could be included in the overall policy. Furthermore, possible existing technologies, developed as part of the SDI, would, thus, not be left unutilized.

The revived missile defense plan called for the development of antimissile systems capable of eliminating a potential limited ballistic missile attack during all of the three stages of its path: launch, midcourse, and descent phases. In order to do so, it would employ a “layered defense” using a combination of weapons such as sea-based radars, ship-based antiballistic missile defense weapons, space- and land-based warning and targeting systems, and a variety of short and medium range antimissile weapons.²³

In addition, the call for protection of the US and its allies added a multilateral dimension to the policy. It opened the window to much-needed support from key allied nations, whose role in the implementation of missile defense was perceived by the US as being important. The inclusion of allied considerations did not create consensus among US allies, but addressed some of the expressed concerns against a missile defense.²⁴ This was particularly the case with respect to NATO. During the NATO summit in Prague, in 2002, its member states decided to examine the issue of missile defense.²⁵

The decision of the US to proceed with the development of missile defense for the protection of its homeland, including its forces and allies, has, therefore, consequences for the latter.

The dynamic and forceful choice of the Bush administration to proceed with missile defense, was perceived by opponents of the policy as a signal of the beginning of a new missile race and the danger of destabilizing the decades-long balance of power system. In addition, the development of a US missile defense led

several European countries to believe that the US would turn its attention away from the protection of Europe.²⁶ Also, the development of missile defense could provide an excuse to use ballistic missiles. As a result, the rationale of deterrence through the mutual assured destruction framework could cease to exist.²⁷

However, many of these arguments lost their validity once Russia, among several other countries, decided to embark on a series of cooperative activities related to US missile defense. Russia, Israel, Japan, Australia, India, Italy, Germany, UK, and Denmark were among the countries engaged with US-initiated missile defense. A possible explanation for this series of bilateral agreements is the fact that two of these countries are concerned with the activities of North Korea. Those countries are, clearly, Japan and Australia. Countries such as the UK and, again, Australia were also perceived as necessary to support US efforts, due to the existence of early warning capabilities in their territory. Moreover, several other countries, including many NATO members, have in their arsenals the Patriot anti-aircraft system, which is an indispensable component of the theater stage of missile defense.²⁸

The special relationship between the UK and the US was, therefore, the product of a well-calculated assessment between the two countries, based on their long-term interests, and the strategies to execute them.

Furthermore, the inclusion of other countries in US missile defense created a framework for allied participation in the development of the system. Thus, it opened the door for enhanced cooperation between the US and foreign defense establishments. For example, the US-Israel missile defense system, Arrow, drew the attention of India, which is at present an important client of the Israeli defense industries.²⁹

The decision of the US to proceed with the development of missile defense for the protection of its homeland, including its forces and allies, has, therefore, consequences for the latter. The involvement of several countries in the program may happen for different reasons and with different objectives in mind.

Although the involvement of Japan and Australia can be understood quite fairly, due to their proximity to North Korea, the involvement of other countries, particularly the UK, is less clear. Following the war in Iraq and the demise of Saddam Hussein's regime, the threat from Iraq does not exist. Also, the willingness of Libya to give up its WMD programs alleviates much of the threat stemming from the Middle East. For the time being, the only country in the wider Middle East region presenting a possible threat is Iran, although it is believed that Iran's missile capabilities are still limited. Additionally, the relationship between Iran and the European Union make it difficult to argue that Iran is a threat to the UK.³⁰

The context of the relationship between the UK and the US is of paramount importance in understanding the reasons that led the UK to engage in US missile

defense. Of equal importance is the way in which the UK's involvement in that missile defense influences and affects US missile defense policy objectives. In order to investigate this premise, it is required to present the wider relationship between the US and the UK.

US-UK SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP AND MISSILE DEFENSE: THE BACKGROUND

On February 23, 2001, after a meeting between US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, a joint statement was issued “reaffirming the uniquely close relationship that exists between the United States and the United Kingdom: a relationship rooted in common history, common values, and common interests around the globe.”³¹ Further on, the joint statement, *inter alia*, recognized the threat of the proliferation of WMD and their delivery missiles.³²

During the press conference following the meeting, President Bush and Prime Minister Blair appeared to be on par with respect to the missile defense policy of the US government. The US president argued that the threat of an accidental missile launch or potential blackmail against the US, UK, or one of their allies, by one of the countries possessing WMD and missile capabilities, created commitments for the US, which has to act in a “realistic way.” The British Prime Minister responded by accepting the premise of the US desire to proceed with missile defense and welcomed the US readiness to discuss this issue and consult with its allies.³³ It is evident from that single meeting that the UK accepted the US decision to develop missile defense systems and was willing to discuss it.

What is more important about the willingness of the UK to accept Bush's argument is the foundation on which the US-UK relationship is based. The reference by the two leaders to the commonalities existing between their respective nations has its roots in a century-old arrangement founded on a well-calculated policy of alignment. It is argued that the US and the UK began developing an appreciation for each other during the last years of the nineteenth century, when the rise of Germany and Russia in Europe forced Britain to reconsider its policy toward the US. For the best part of the decades following the American War of Independence, the UK undermined any attempt of its former colony to develop as a strong nation in North America.³⁴ Nevertheless, the two world wars fought in the first half of the twentieth century, and the devastating effects they had on the European continent, led to the rise of the US as a global power.

The fall of the British Empire, which began during the early twentieth century and ended in the 1960s, also contributed to the UK's turn toward the US. The British leaders realized that if the UK were to sustain its pivotal role in the world, it would have to be through a special relationship with the US. In 1948, Sir Winston Churchill, in his famous “three circles” speech, formulated the UK's flexible foreign policy.³⁵ Its attention was to be divided equally and accordingly between its European, Atlantic, and international role. Acting as a pivot between all three, the UK sought

out a role for itself while its colonies gained independence one after the other. Today, the international role of the UK is of less importance due to the eclipse of the colonial world and the rather ceremonial role of the British Commonwealth that followed. The UK maintains its European and Atlantic identity and aspires to remain a transatlantic bridge between the US and Europe.

The special relationship between the UK and the US was, therefore, the product of a well-calculated assessment between the two countries, based on their long-term interests, and the strategies to execute them. One particular area in which the two countries cooperated closely, albeit with tension in some cases, was defense. On the US side, the relationship with the UK provided an ally in Europe and, in addition, it allowed America to utilize the UK's extensive diplomatic experience. The creation of NATO, following the end of World War II, solidified the Atlantic alliance and allowed the UK to serve as a link between Europe and America.

Moreover, the cooperation between the UK and the US in the domain of strategic defense has been far more important than any other area of defense cooperation.

In addition, the UK maintained several overseas bases that remained vital geostrategic holdings even after the end of the Empire. Some of these overseas territories were of considerable importance to the US. Some of the most notable examples of the American utilization of British bases were the British islands of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, British bases on the island of Cyprus in the East Mediterranean, and the stationing of US forces and important electronic systems such as the EWR in Fylingdales and Menwith Hill in Britain.

This close collaboration extended, particularly, into the area of joint weapon development. One famous example has been the case of the Vertical and/or Short Take-Off and Landing (VSTOL) aircraft, "Harrier," designed by British Aerospace, now known as McDonnell Douglas, in the 1970s. Another such example has been the development and sale to the US, of the Rapiers surface-to-air missile (SAM) system in the early 1980s by the British defense industries.

Moreover, the cooperation between the UK and the US in the domain of strategic defense has been far more important than any other area of defense cooperation. One of the most important examples of the strong relationship in this area has been the case of two British nuclear submarines, the Polaris, and those equipped with Trident ballistic missiles. In these two cases, the US agreed to provide Britain with second strike capability weapons, although it would retain a right for joint control of the weapons. It is argued that the US agreed to provide Britain with the details of their submarine-launched missile system, Polaris, following its refusal to sell the Skybolt missile project to the UK. The importance of cooperation in strategic weapons remains today.³⁶

Similarly, the defense collaboration between the two countries extends in areas of military policies and, naturally, military undertakings that culminate in the UK's

staunch support of the US war in Iraq in 2003.

However, the strategic relationship between the UK and the US was not without problems, the greatest example of which was the Suez Crisis in 1956. The refusal of the US to support the Anglo-French and Israeli plan, and the subsequent British withdrawal from the canal, signaled the end of the UK's perception of itself as a global presence.³⁷ Nevertheless, the relationship with the US was quickly restored. Although it was evident from that point on that Britain's competitive advantage was not to be found in its global presence, which was diminishing, but in its role within Europe. It was through this European capacity that the UK was able to increase its importance to the US and act as the link between the two continents.

The years following the Suez crisis saw a series of other bitter moments in the Anglo-American relationship. The British unwillingness to support the US's Vietnam policy was another important example of the not-so-special strategic relationship between the two nations.

Nonetheless, the relationship was reinstated and enhanced during the 1980s with the leadership of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and US President Ronald Reagan. The close political friendship between the two, their ideological similarities, and common anti-Soviet foreign policy objectives comprise the foundation on which a new era of strong Anglo-American cooperation was built.

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The support expressed by the British prime minister to President Reagan's SDI policy was of the utmost importance. Prime Minister Thatcher believed that US plans for an antimissile defense were correct, not because it would lead to a nuclear-weapons-free world, but because it was right.³⁸ In addition, the British prime minister was greatly concerned that the Soviets would exploit any rift between the UK and the US, and she was ready to reassure everyone that Britain "would remain [a staunch ally] of the US."³⁹

Besides Margaret Thatcher's belief that the UK should support the US SDI based on principle, she also believed that the program was destined to succeed for several reasons. The first was the scientific challenge and the pursuit of technological developments necessary for the implementation of the SDI. Those scientific challenges would lead to a competition between the West and the East, thereby improving the abilities of each system. The second was the belief that the Soviet Union already possessed an antimissile defense system stationed around Moscow. Therefore, the West had a right to do the same. The third reason was her belief that SDI would add to the concept of deterrence. With antimissile defense, a country like the US could increase its second strike capability, which, in turn, would make a potential opponent twice as cautious about launching a missile attack.⁴⁰

As a result, the US-UK special relationship spilled over into their respective antimissile defense policies. Consequently, the UK and the US have cooperated in the area of missile defense systems since 1985, based on that year's "Memorandum of Understanding relating to Cooperative Research for the Strategic Defense Initiative."⁴¹

To argue that missile defense collaboration must be pursued in order to maintain a foreign policy friendship provides, at best, a narrow explanation.

The demise of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the communist bloc did not weaken the relationship between the US and the UK. On the contrary, the UK was ready to closely engage with the US in the new state of affairs changing the international scene.

The European integration, the enlargement of NATO with the admission of new members, the rise of new security concerns such as terrorism, and the close economic cooperation between Europe and America were some of the reasons that persuaded the two allies to stay close. Moreover, the UK was free from the Soviet threat and, consequently, the unilateral need for American protection. The end of the Cold War contributed to the establishment of a new type of affair between the two countries that would be founded on a more equal relationship. Based on this new principle, the UK was, in essence, ready to further pursue its long-held policy of the key transatlantic link between the US and Europe. The British government of Tony Blair set out to attain this goal by trying to increase British influence on Washington.⁴² Although substantially different from the premise on which the relationship between Thatcher and Reagan was based, the new relationship between the US and the UK was to be safeguarded and enhanced.

The UK believed that the political reactions to the events of September 11, 2001, which led the US to devise a rather unilateralist approach to foreign policy, could only be controlled if Britain remained close to the US, so as to maintain America's relationship with Europe. Basically, this policy meant that the UK was persuaded to believe that the US would have pursued its policies irrespective of any support from its allies. Therefore, the best British policy was to remain close to the US and attempt to influence American policies while enhancing the UK's role as a broker between the US and Europe.⁴³ This particular explanation provides a useful defense of the reasons that led the UK to support the Bush policy on missile defense. However, it has very little relevance to actual objectives in the area of missile defense in either of the two countries. To argue that missile defense collaboration must be pursued in order to maintain a foreign policy friendship provides, at best, a narrow explanation.

Therefore, in order to identify the reasons, as well as the effects of the UK involvement with US missile defense policy, it is necessary to revisit some of the questions raised at the beginning of this paper. Is the UK's involvement necessary to

the success of US missile defense? How is US missile defense being affected by the UK's involvement? Besides security considerations, if any, are there any other reasons that could explain the US-UK cooperation in missile defense?

ANSWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

The US request to upgrade the Fylingdales radar station in the UK is in line with its policy of cooperation with allies in the creation and implementation of a missile defense system. The US specifically states in the National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 23 that they will seek permission from the UK and Denmark to upgrade EWRs in Fylingdales and Thule, Greenland as part of their capability.⁴⁴

The Fylingdales radar station is capable of providing a forward-looking ability to the missile defense system, due to its positioning several thousand miles away from the US coasts. This geographic advantage is considered crucial in order to satisfy an early warning need that could provide adequate time for an US response.

On the part of the UK, the involvement in US-led missile defense started with Thatcher and has evolved ever since. The UK's 1998 Strategic Defense Review recognized the importance of missile defense and initiated a three-year study in order to explore the issue in relation to defense of UK forces.⁴⁵

However, what remains quite unexplained is the reason for a forward early warning system in the Atlantic Ocean when the primary threat emanates from North Korea, located on the Pacific side of the US. This issue is of particular importance because it assists in clarifying the scope of the missile defense system and the effects of a radar system in Britain on the strategic orientation of US missile defense.

Evidently, the radar at Fylingdales provides forward early warning abilities in respect to threats from the Middle East. Following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and the current rapprochement between the US and Europe with Libya, the only other possible existing threat comes from Iran. Iran is believed to have bought ballistic missile technology from North Korea,⁴⁶ but that technology is not known to have provided Iran with an intercontinental strike ability capable of reaching the US. At best, Iran's ballistic program constitutes a threat to Israel and the countries of the Persian Gulf. In addition, Iran's desire to develop a nuclear program that may possibly be useful in the development of nuclear weapons, adds considerably to the legitimacy of the threat. However, one must question the willingness of Iran to threaten or even fire a ballistic missile against the US or any of its allies. Although Iran remains engaged with Europe, that country's relationship with the US is at a low point. Therefore, without any signs of improvement in relations between the US and Iran, and considering the US military presence in the Middle East, one must assume that precautions should be taken. Still, the precautions should be related to TMD, in which case the Fylingdales radar is of relatively little use. Its role is to provide forward early warning in the case of an intercontinental strike against the US.

Also, the possible threat against the UK from Iran or any other Middle Eastern country is remote. The UK projects that, at the present, no ballistic missile threatens

its territory. In addition, the only area in which the UK's interests may fall under a possible ballistic missile threat is located on the island of Cyprus in the East Mediterranean. However, the excellent relations that Cyprus maintains with all of its neighbors in the Persian Gulf, and with Iran, make such an argument very weak. The relative inaccuracy of a ballistic missile renders its use against British interests in Cyprus highly unlikely, if not impossible. Also, Iran would never put its relationship with Cyprus in jeopardy; something that could happen if a missile would be fired against or accidentally fall on an area in or close to Cyprus.

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Considering the absence of any specific intercontinental ballistic missile threat, that would explain the forward early warning usefulness of the Fylingdales radar station to either the US or the UK, what are the policy implications of the inclusion of the Fylingdales radar into US-UK antimissile defense planning?

The involvement of the Fylingdales radar station in antiballistic missile defense indicates that the US and its allies wish to maintain their defense abilities against a potential or accidental missile launch from Russia. This is a valid proposition to make, considering accidental launches were part of the initial rationale explaining the Bush administration's decision to employ a missile defense capability.⁴⁷ As long as Russia maintains its ballistic missile capabilities, the US will pursue its desire to defend against any potential launch. The Fylingdales radar has been in place since the 1960s. Its upgrade, as it has been decided by the US and the UK, will only add to its existing abilities. Therefore, the involvement of the Fylingdales radar does not alter the already existing matrix of relations between the US and Russia. The Fylingdales's capacity to provide early warning against possible launches from Russia, particularly accidental ones, provides an adequate explanation for US-UK cooperation in missile defense. However, one of the most important aspects of the US-UK cooperation in missile defense has been the commercial aspect of the relationship.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

One of the fundamental premises on which the US based the inclusion of allies and friends in its missile defense policy is the encouragement of industrial cooperation and participation in missile defense.⁴⁸

On December 17, 2002, the British minister of defense, Geoff Hoon, addressed the British Parliament to inform them about the US request to upgrade Fylingdales. One of the issues cited by the British defense minister from the US request was Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's proposal to the UK for bilateral cooperation in the areas of research, development, and testing and evaluation of missile defense technology.⁴⁹ Minister Hoon proceeded to argue, "this represents an important industrial and technological opportunity for the UK, regardless of our response to the US request."⁵⁰ On January 15, 2003, following a deposition of the British

government's willingness to respond positively to the US request, Defense Minister Hoon said that the UK would agree to a new MOU with the US in the areas of technical cooperation which would provide "the opportunity for the UK industry to reap the benefits of participation."⁵¹

Initially, the British minister of defense refrained from directly linking the Fylingdales decision with the US-UK MOU on missile defense cooperation. The creation of a public-private partnership called the Missile Defense Center in the UK in 2003, however, and the public statements made during its opening ceremony, in the presence of MDA director, Lieutenant General Kadish, leave little doubt as to the relationship between the two decisions. Fylingdales and industrial missile defense cooperation were part and parcel of the same issue.

At the opening ceremony of the MDC, Lord Bach, UK minister for defense procurement, stated that

*with the US program running at some eight billion per year, the opportunities for UK industry are clear. In the MDC we are looking to develop a well-defined, well-directed, and jointly funded hardware demonstration program focusing on areas of UK expertise. In time, I hope that UK industry will play a significant role within the US missile defense program.*⁵²

Kadish's statement was along the same lines. In stark contrast, and quite interestingly, the senior vice president and general manager of Boeing Missile Defense Systems, who was present at the ceremony, was the only one that spoke about the defense rather than the commercial aspects of US-UK cooperation.⁵³ Although the center was established for commercial and technical cooperation in the area of missile defense, the fact that business was emphasized more than the actual strategic aspect of the project was rather awkward.

The MDC includes a foundation group of five major British industry participants: AMS, BAE Systems, INSYS Ltd, MBDA and QinetiQ. The UK government's participation, in financial terms, is approximately \$8 million per year for a period of six years, starting in 2003. This particular aspect of the US-UK deal created much controversy in the UK. In September 2003, British Minister of Defense Hoon was accused of "hiding" the financial involvement of the UK in the development of missile defenses through the MDC.⁵⁴ Moreover, the discussion that followed in the British Parliament proved that the UK had spent almost \$55 million dollars between 1994 and 1996 in missile defense development.⁵⁵ Essentially, the UK was not going to just reap the benefits from its involvement with the US missile defense, but in addition, was destined to contribute, even at very low levels, to the weapon development effort.

The view that the cooperation between the UK and the US in missile defense is better explained in business, rather than strategic terms, is reinforced by the kind of partnerships formed between British and American defense contractors. In June 2003, Lockheed Martin Corporation signed an MOU with BAE Systems in order to "explore partnership opportunities in missile defense around the world."⁵⁶ Both

companies are also members of a multinational team, named "Team Janus," which was set up in order to explore multinational cooperation in missile defense for NATO.⁵⁷ This example of cooperation between a British and American company came almost a year after BAE Systems signed a similar agreement, over missile defense cooperation with Boeing.⁵⁸ BAE was, in both agreements, involving major US defense corporations, because it was officially appointed to lead the UK industry group that initially participated in the establishment of the UK's MDC.⁵⁹

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Considering the absence of any current missile threat against the US or the UK, from the Middle East or Russia, the upgrading of the Fylingdales radar, which serves as a forward early warning system, seems to lack a proper strategic explanation. Besides the early warning capability, in the case of an accidental missile launch against the US from Russia, and the possibility of some future threat from the Middle East, the strategic reason for the involvement of the Fylingdales radar with missile defense remains, according to the findings of this paper, unjustified. This is not to argue, however, that no precautions should be taken against unforeseen and future threats.

On the other hand, the level of spending required for the Fylingdales radar's upgrade to be useful in its new role of tracking and estimating the paths of ballistic missiles, and thus contribute to the overall US missile defense, increased, rather than decreased, sparking some speculation about the purpose of the project. According to the MDA, the upgrade of RAF Fylingdales will cost \$112 million dollars.⁶⁰ Moreover, the emphasis on the business aspect of the UK's involvement, advocated almost in equal intensity by both American and British officials, adds to that concern. Instead of emphasizing the strategic and defense purposes of the transatlantic partnership, and addressing the arguments raised by opponents of missile defense, who call for the abolishment of the Fylingdales decision, the governments of both countries emphasized the business benefits expected from this cooperation, even though, these benefits concerned only a handful of companies in either country.

The special relationship between the US and the UK finds a place in missile defense, but its purpose, as indicated above, is more commercial than strategic. The involvement of the UK in US missile defense does not contribute to declared American objectives of providing protection to its own territories, its forces, and those of its allies and friends. In addition, the fact that Denmark remains undecided on its decision to provide the US with the authority to upgrade a similar radar station in Greenland leads to the conclusion that the early warning system of the north

Atlantic is not complete, even with the participation of Britain.⁶¹ Fundamentally, the involvement of the UK in US missile defense policy is of no particular strategic value at the present. It retains, nevertheless, a considerable economic value to the defense industries of both countries.

Notes

¹ US Department of Defense, Missile Defense Agency: Public Statements, *Statement by Lieutenant General Ronald T. Kadish before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the subject of Missile Defense Program and Fiscal Year 2005 Budget*, Available at: <http://www.mda.mil/mdalink/pdf/spring04.pdf> (Accessed March 16, 2004).

² *Ibid.*, 8.

³ The United Kingdom Parliament, House of Commons, Defence Committee, *Volume I of the First Report of Session 2002-03 on Missile Defense* published on 29 January 2003. Available at: <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmdfence/290-i/29002.htm> (Accessed March 16, 2004). It is worth mentioning that the involvement of the United Kingdom in missile defense has been surrounded by much controversy throughout the development of the debate in the UK Parliament. The main reason of which has been, according to the competent House committee on Defense, the handling of the case by the UK government.

⁴ British Embassy in the USA, British Foreign Policy, Defense and Security, "Missile Defence: US Request for UK Facilities." *Written statement to Parliament by UK Defense Secretary Geoff Hoon, 17 December 2002*. Available at: http://www.britainusa.com/sections/articles_show_nt1.asp?i=41062&l1=41012&l2=41062&l3=1&a=22227&D=9 (Accessed March 23, 2004).

⁵ United Kingdom. Ministry of Defence. News Archives, Press Notice no. 025/03, "MOD Responds to US Request to Upgrade RAF Fylingdales," February 5, 2003. Available at: http://news.mod.uk/news/press/news_press_notice.asp?newsItem_id=2271 (Accessed March 23, 2004).

⁶ United Kingdom. Ministry of Defence. News Archives, Press Notice no. 167/2003, "Lord Bach Attends Launch of UK Missile Defence Centre," July 18, 2003. Available at: http://news.mod.uk/news/press/news_press_notice.asp?newsItem_id=2544 (Accessed March 23, 2004). The UK private sector initial involvement includes five major British companies and aims to attract the involvement of several others including academic and research organizations.

⁷ United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence. "MOD Responds to US Request to Upgrade RAF Fylingdales." *Written Statement to the House of Commons from Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon* News Archive, Press Notice no. 025/03. February 5, 2003. Available at: http://news.mod.uk/news/press/news_press_notice.asp?newsItem_id=2271 (Accessed March 23, 2004).

⁸ United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence. *Missile Defence; A Public Discussion Paper*, December, 2002. Available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/space/library/report/2002/missiledef.pdf> (Accessed March, 9, 2004).

⁹ White House, "National Policy on Ballistic Missile Defense Fact Sheet" *Office of the Press Secretary: News & Policies*, May 20, 2003. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030520-15.html> (Accessed April 10, 2006).

¹⁰ United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence. *Missile Defence; A Public Discussion Paper*, December, 2002. Available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/space/library/report/2002/missiledef.pdf> (Accessed March, 9, 2004).

¹¹ The first ballistic missile was the V-2 and it used by the German Nazi at the last stages of WWII against the United Kingdom. The first V-2 missile, a successor to the V-1 unmanned surface-to-surface rocket, hit London on September 8, 1944. Between 1944 and 1945, the UK attempted to develop several defenses in order to counter the devastating effects of the V-2 strikes. The most comprehensive defense tactic at the time called for the employment of timed antiaircraft barrages. This plan was never implemented because of the potential destruction resulting from unexploded anti aircraft shells falling back on the ground. Missile Defense Agency, "Missile Defense Timeline: 1944-2004" *MDA Historian's Office*. Available at <http://www.mda.mil/mdalink/html/milestone.html> (Accessed April 10, 2006).

¹² Missile Defense Agency, "Ballistic Missile Defense: A Brief History" *MDA Historian's Office*. Available at <http://www.mda.mil/mdalink/html/briefhis.html> (Accessed April 10, 2006).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ The US missile defense system named Safeguard was to be stationed at a site near Grand Forks, North Dakota. *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on Defense and National Security," *Press Conference from the Oval Office at the White House (broadcast live on nationwide radio and television)* March 23, 1983. See University of Texas, Austin:

Archived speeches. Available at <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/32383d.htm> (Accessed April 10, 2006).

¹⁶ For an interesting description of the shift in missile defense policies between the different US administrations following the Reagan presidency, see James M. Lindsay and Michael E. O' Hanlon *Defending America: The Case for Limited National Missile Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 3- 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸ White House, "Remarks by the President to Students and Faculty at National Defense University," Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC., May 1, 2001 *Office of the Press Secretary: News & Policies*. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/05/20010501-10.html> (Accessed April 12, 2006).

¹⁹ At the time, the writer was serving at the United Nations 54th General Assembly and was able to experience first hand the discussion surrounding the US decision.

²⁰ National Security Council, *The National Security Strategy* March 2006. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/> (Accessed April 12, 2006).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD-23*, "National Policy on Ballistic Missile Defense" White House, Washington, DC., December 16, 2002. Available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdp/nsdp-23.htm> (Accessed April 12, 2006).

²³ "Missile Defense Basics," Missile Defense Agency (MDA Link). Available at <http://www.mda.mil/mdalink/html/faq.html#mdb> (Accessed April 12, 2006).

²⁴ Several articles have been written about the views of US allies concerning missile defense. Ivo H. Daalder and Christopher Makins, "A Consensus on Missile Defense?" *Survival* 43, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 61-94.

²⁵ NATO, "Statement by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, in his capacity as Chairman of the NATO-Russia Council at the NATO-Russia Council Meeting at the Level of Foreign Ministers," press release, November 22, 2002. Available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p021122e.htm> (Accessed April 13, 2006).

²⁶ Ioannis Parisis, "The Defense Autonomy of United Europe: Prospects and Problems," (Greek language) *Institute of Defense Analyses* (Athens, Greece: Metaichmio Editions, 2001), 204-210.

²⁷ For an interesting assessment of the possibility of a new missile race and the theoretical operations of deterrence see Robert Powell, "Nuclear Deterrence Theory, Nuclear Proliferation, and National Missile Defense," *International Security* 27, no. 4 (Spring 2003): 86-118.

²⁸ For a composite view on the international character of the missile defense and the participation of US allies in it see Jeremy Feiler, "Crouch: US Reaching Out to Allies on Missile Defense Cooperation," *Inside Washington Publishers: Inside Missile Defense*, (March 5, 2003).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence. *Missile Defence; A Public Discussion Paper*, December, 2002. Available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/space/library/report/2002/missiledef.pdf> (Accessed March, 9, 2004).

³¹ White House, "Remarks by the President and Prime Minister Blair in Joint Press Conference," Green Top Camp Dining Hall, Camp David, Maryland, February 23, 2001 *Office of the Press Secretary: News & Policies*. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/02/20010226-1.html> (Accessed April 15, 2006).

³² *Ibid.*

³³ "UK's Blair Supportive of Bush on Missile Defense," February 24, 2001. Available at <http://www.cnsnews.com> (Accessed April 15, 2006).

³⁴ Walter Russell Mead *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 18-23.

³⁵ Brian P. White, "British Foreign Policy: Tradition and Change," in *Foreign Policy in World Politics*, ed. Roy C. Macrides (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: A Simon & Schuster Company: Prentice Hall, 1992), 7-30.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 463.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ The writer is compelled to state that the arguments are indicative of Prime Minister Thatcher's rationale. They were obtained from her already cited autobiography. *Ibid.*, 464-466.

⁴¹ United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence. *Missile Defence; A Public Discussion Paper*, December, 2002, 20, 29. Available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/space/library/report/2002/missiledef.pdf> (Accessed March 9, 2004).

⁴² James K. Wither, "British Bulldog or Bush's Poodle? Anglo-American Relations and the Iraq War," *Parameters* 33 No. 4, Winter 2003-2004, 67- 82.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD-23*, "National Policy on Ballistic Missile Defense"

⁴⁵ *Missile Defence: A Public Discussion Paper*, 21.

⁴⁶ Ibid.; see also Lindsay and O' Hanlon, *Defending America*, 58-73.

⁴⁷ White House, "Remarks by the President and Prime Minister Blair in Joint Press Conference," Green Top Camp Dining Hall, Camp David, Maryland, February 23, 2001 *Office of the Press Secretary: News & Policies*. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/02/20010226-1.html> (Accessed April 15, 2006).

⁴⁸ "National Policy on Ballistic Missile Defense Fact Sheet" White House Office of the Press Secretary, May, 20, 2003. Available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030520-15.html> (Accessed March 31, 2006).

⁴⁹ Geoffrey Hoon. "Missile Defence: US Request for UK Facilities." *Written statement to Parliament*, December 17, 2002. Available at: http://www.britainusa.com/sections/articles_show_nt1.asp?i=41062&L1=41012&L2=41062&a=22227&D=9 (Accessed March 23, 2004).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "UK's Hoon Calls US Missile Defense Proposal Invaluable," US Embassy, Belgium, January 15, 2003. Available at: <http://www.uspolicy.be/Article.asp?ID=2556508B-4BA6-47FE-A12E-5DA3ADBCEDD8> (Accessed March 16, 2004).

⁵² "Newly-opened UK Missile Defense Center to Work With US," UK Ministry of Defence, July 18, 2003. Available at http://www.briatinusa.com/sections/articles_show_nt1.asp?i=41062&L1=41012&L2=41062&a=22245&D=9 (Accessed March 23, 2004).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Severin Carrell, "Britain to spend £30m on Star Wars' weapons test," *Independent on Sunday* (London), September 21, 2003.

⁵⁵ Rich Tuttle, "Hoon details British missile defense spending," *Aerospace Daily*, January 22, 2004. 5.

⁵⁶ "Lockheed Martin signs MOU with BAE Systems," *Baltimore Business Journal*, June 24, 2003. Available at: <http://www.bizjournals.com/baltimore/stories/2003/06/23/daily15.html> (Accessed March 31, 2006).

⁵⁷ Stanley Sloan, *NATO, the European Union and the Atlantic Community: The Transatlantic Bargain Reconsidered* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 130-131.

⁵⁸ "Boeing and BAE Systems Announce Missile Defense Partnership," *Boeing*, July 23, 2002, Available at http://www.boeing.com/news/releases/2002/q3/nr_020724s.html (Accessed March 31, 2006).

⁵⁹ "BAE System to Lead Industry Group for UK Missile Defence Centre," *BAE Systems*, August 1, 2003, Available at: <http://www.baesystems.com/newsroom/2003/aug/010803news1.htm> (Accessed March 31, 2006).

⁶⁰ "Early Warning Radar in UK to get missile defense upgrade," *Defense Daily International*, November 7, 2003. Available at <http://www.defensedaily.com/> (Accessed April 15, 2006).

⁶¹ The absence of any decision by Denmark on whether to allow the US to upgrade its radar in Greenland is a result of a US policy miscalculation. The US approached Denmark with the relevant request because Denmark maintains control over the foreign policy of Greenland. However, the United States failed to make any appeals to the Greenlanders, whose internal parliament considers such issues. The failure to engage the inhabitants of Greenland and to reach out only to Denmark contributed to the current deadlock. Nevertheless, Denmark is participating in missile defense at the theater missile defense level through the upgrading of its patriot missiles.