

What would you do if an enemy tested a weapon that could kill millions of your fellow citizens? According to Heritage Foundation vice president Kim Holmes, the logical response would be to build up a missile defense system capable of knocking a ballistic missile out of the sky. Unfortunately, the Obama Administration's recent announcement to cut missile defense isn't exactly logical. In fact it is downright puzzling. Holmes discusses this confusion in his recent op-ed in the Washington Times.

While North Korea tested a long-range missile, the Pentagon announced a \$1.4 billion cut in missile defense spending--the very programs that would protect the U.S. in the event of a rogue ballistic missile attack. Holmes reminds readers that the Administration will continue our short-range missile programs, of little consolation as we watch North Korea and Iran further their nuclear goals. Holmes argues that it is essential to protect both our troops on the battlefield and the U.S. homeland from missile attacks.

One of the major missile defense programs on the chopping block is the Airborne Laser (ABL) system. This energy directed weapon is used to shoot down a long-range missile shortly after launch--the point at which a missile is most vulnerable. Another casualty looks to be the Ground-Based Interceptor (GBI) program. Holmes asserts that this is completely counterintuitive, since GBIs are the only operational defense capable of destroying a North Korean Taepo Dong-2 missiles heading for the U.S. mainland. Holmes asks, why is the Administration indifferent to protecting the homeland?

The Administration argues that the cuts are out of economic necessity, but nothing could be further from the truth. The \$1.4 billion cut from missile defense comprises 0.04 percent of the overall proposed federal budget, which Holmes compares to "a rounding error in an Obama bailout." In the grand scheme of things, it is a miniscule amount to pay for the protection of all Americans. It's time for the Administration to wake up and smell the rocket fuel. Our missile defense system has been progressing rapidly, and it is not the cause of our economic woes. Indeed, if America was hit by a rogue missile, the discomfort caused by today's economic crisis would pale in comparison to the destruction.

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