GlobalResearch
Center for Research on Globalization

Showdown with Russia and China: U.S. Advances First Strike Global Missile Shield System

By Rick Rozoff
Global Research, August 19, 2009
Stop NATO 19 August 2009
Theme: US NATO War Agenda

On August 13th the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency (MDA) and Chicago-based Boeing International announced a test of their joint Airborne Laser (ABL) missile defense system, which "successfully tracked and hit the mark earlier this month during its first in-flight test against an instrumented target missile." [1]

Employing a modified Boeing 747-400F prototype airplane, on August 10 the Missile Defense Agency had the adapted commercial airliner use infrared sensors against a missile launched from San Nicolas Island, California and "found, tracked, engaged and simulated an intercept with a missile seconds after liftoff. It was the first time the Agency used an 'instrumented' missile to confirm the laser works as expected. Next up this fall will be the first live attempt to bring down a ballistic missile...." [2]

A newspaper from Alabama, the state where the MDA headquarters is based, mentioned that "The news came today [August 13], just a few days before the 12th annual Space and Missile Defense Conference opens next week in Huntsville." [3]

The Wall Street Journal waxed enthusiastic about the advanced missile interceptor test, stating that "Along with space-based weapons, the Airborne Laser is the next defense frontier. The modified Boeing 747 is supposed to send an intense beam of light over hundreds of miles to destroy missiles in the 'boost phase,' before they can release decoys and at a point in their trajectory when they would fall back down on enemy territory....The laser complements the sea- and ground-based missile defenses that keep proving themselves in tests.

"Never has Ronald Reagan's dream of layered missile defenses – Star Wars, for short – been as....close, at least technologically, to becoming realized." [4]

The Boeing 747 Jumbo Jet was launched as a civilian airliner in 1970 and versions of the plane are in use throughout the world, especially in the Middle East. There is no technical reason why 747 commercial airliners cannot be similarly configured to carry Airborne Laser weapons and track and destroy ballistic missiles while camouflaged as strictly civilian passenger planes.

The MDA has revealed that it plans to upgrade Airborne Laser weapons for use against intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) during their boost phase, thereby giving them a strategic character.

As an increasingly vital component of U.S. and allied worldwide, integrated missile interceptor systems, which as will be seen may advance to more than intercepting other

nation's missiles and be capable of destroying them in their silos and launching pads before being fired, the U.S. Missile Defense Agency said of its latest Airborne Laser operation that "this test marks the third successful ABL missile engagement in just over two months and the first time laser performance data was collected at the target missile. Plans call for ABL to engage progressively more difficult targets in coming months, culminating with a lethal demonstration against a boosting threat-representative ballistic missile target later this year." [5]

The ABL is slated to play a progressively more important role in an expanding network of international 21st Century Star Wars and space war projects and deployments which includes short- to medium-range, theater missile defense of the Patriot variety, with the latter recently upgraded to the Patriot Advanced Capability (PAC-3) Missile.

Last October the German Air Force conducted a PAC-3 Missile test at the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico and a news report at the time contained this description of the low-end range of U.S. and allied nations' layered interceptor missile plans: "The Patriot air defence system is a long-range, high to medium altitude missile system and Lockheed Martin is the prime contractor on the PAC-3 Missile Segment upgrade. The PAC-3 Missile will increase the Patriot's firepower from an output of four to 16." [6]

This February U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton confirmed Washington's plans to deploy a Patriot missile battery in Poland, not far from Russia's Kaliningrad enclave, with a garrison of at least 100 troops to man it in addition to plans to base 10 interceptor missiles in the country.

On August 17 Japan announced that it was going to station American Patriot Advanced Capability 3 (PAC-3) surface-to-air interceptor missiles at all six of its anti-aircraft facilities. Patriots were deployed to Israel on the eve of the Operation Desert Storm war against Iraq in 1991 and again, with NATO invoking its Article 5 military assistance provision, to Turkey in 2003 before the Operation Iraqi Freedom invasion. They are intended to prevent retaliation against aggressive military operations.

The global and more than global – exoatmospheric, space – system also includes Ground Based Interceptor (GBI), Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD), Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), Exoatmospheric Kill Vehicle (EKV), Aegis combat system (destroyers carrying interceptor radar and missiles) and Forward Based X-Band Radars (FBXB) components.

Disarmament advocates and top Russian officials alike have warned for years that the missile interceptor and related space war programs are not, as claimed by the Pentagon and its military allies in Europe and the Asia Pacific, aimed at so-called rogue states but have a far more dangerous purpose.

In June Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Chinese President Hu Jintao announced that their two nations were drafting a joint treaty to ban the deployment of weapons in outer space and to present it to the United Nations General Assembly.

Regarding the true intent of missile interceptor plans both on earth and in space, a recent news item detailed that "The White House says the plan is aimed at countering what it terms as 'threats' from countries such as Iran, which has no existing or planned missiles which can reach the US. The Kremlin, meanwhile, believes that the real aim of the system is

to neutralize Russia's nuclear deterrent and therefore sees it as a threat to Russia's national security." [7]

An influential Russian news source stated: "[T]he strategic importance of these interceptor missiles would increase were the U.S. to deliver a
first nuclear strike against Russia.

"In this scenario, interceptor missiles would have to take on the limited number of missiles surviving the first strike, which would allow the U.S. to hope for success and, for the first time since the 1950s, for a victory in a nuclear war." [8]

Lest this perspective be seen as a uniquely Russia concern, in the March/April 2006 edition of Foreign Affairs, a publication of the American Council on Foreign Relations, authors Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press contributed a study called "The Rise of U.S. Nuclear Primacy" which stated, inter alia, that "It will probably soon be possible for the United States to destroy the long-range nuclear arsenals of Russia or China with a first strike.

"The U.S. Air Force has finished equipping its B-52 bombers with nuclear-armed cruise missiles, which are probably invisible to Russian and Chinese air-defense radar. And the air force has also enhanced the avionics on its B-2 stealth bombers to permit them to fly at extremely low altitudes in order to avoid even the most sophisticated radar." [9]

Deploying short-, medium- and long-range interceptor missile batteries, sophisticated and mobile missile radar stations, long-range super-stealth nuclear bombers, Aegis-class destroyers equipped to sail the world's seas to hunt down and neutralize conventional and nuclear missiles, and surveillance satellites and weapons in space is hardly designed to target non-existent intercontinental ballistic missile threats from Iran or Syria, or even from North Korea, but to blackmail Russia and China and prepare the groundwork for surviving and "triumphing" in a first strike nuclear war.

On August 11 the commander of the Russian Air Force, Col. Gen. Alexander Zelin, warned that "By 2030…foreign countries, particularly the United States, will be able to deliver coordinated high-precision strikes from air and space against any target on the whole territory of Russia," adding "That is why the main goal of the development of the Russian Air Force until 2020 is to create a new branch of the Armed Forces, which would form the core of the country's air and space defenses to provide a reliable deterrent during peacetime, and repel any military aggression with the use of conventional and nuclear arsenals in a time of war" [10] and "We are building new missiles that will be capable of defending not only against air-defense systems but space-based systems." [11]

The following day Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi told the 65-nation Conference on Disarmament in Geneva "Outer space is now facing the looming danger of weaponization. Credible and effective multilateral measures must be taken to forestall the weaponization and arms race in outer space."

Yang demanded that "Countries should neither develop missile defense systems that undermine global strategic stability nor deploy weapons in outer space." [12]

The Western news report in which the quotes appeared added "China and Russia have been vocal advocates of a global treaty against space-based weapons and argue for this to be included in future Conference of Disarmament negotiations," but that "United States has

dismissed the criticism as designed to block its plans for a missile interceptor system.…" [13]

Undeterred by Chinese and Russian concerns, the U. S. is forging ahead with expanding its Star Wars and space wars dyad in both depth and breadth.

Two days ago the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency commenced its 12th annual Space and Missile Defense Conference in Huntsville, Alabama where its headquarters is situated, and which includes a new Von Braun Center named after the father of Nazi Germany's missile project and one of the creators of the US ICBM program who with several German colleagues was sent to Huntsville in 1950 (Operation Paperclip) to work on the first live nuclear ballistic missile tests conducted by the Pentagon.

This year the Von Braun Center hosts over 2,000 participants and 230 exhibitors and speakers including Marine Gen. James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden Jr., Army Lt. Gen. Kevin Campbell, commanding general of the Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command, and Missile Defense Agency Director Lt. Gen. Patrick O'Reilly.

"The conference also includes receptions and special events sponsored by a number of the exhibitors, which include Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman.…" [14]

As was seen earlier, the Pentagon's most advanced Airborne Laser missile interception test to date was conducted in advance of the conference.

The MDA is also accelerating the pace of full spectrum air, sea, land, cyber and space missile shield developments in addition to laser weapons.

On August 1 it announced it had completed a successful sea-based missile interception from Hawaii. A ballistic missile was fired from the island of Kauai and "shot down by a three-stage interceptor missile from the USS Hopper." [15]

A report that appeared before the interception quoted the MDA as saying that "The test, conducted by the Navy and the Department of Defense's Missile Defense Agency, will mark the 23rd firing by ships equipped with the Aegis ballistic missile defense system. There have been 18 successes, including the shooting down of a dead U.S. spy satellite from space last year.

"While the Hopper fires and guides an SM-3 Block IA missile to intercept the target missile in the upper atmosphere, the USS O'Kane will simulate engagement and the USS Lake Erie will detect and track the target.…" [16]

"USS Lake Erie's recently installed Aegis upgrade will enable it to engage increasingly longer range, more sophisticated ballistic missiles, according to the Missile Defense Agency." [17]

The disabled satellite mentioned above, the USA-193 spy satellite, was shot down in space in February of 2008 by the same USS Lake Erie, an Aegis-class Guided Missile Cruiser, that participated in the above-described test.

At the time of the satellite's destruction China registered a complaint and "Russia's Defense Ministry said the U.S. plan could be used as a cover to test a new space weapon." [18]

In fact Russian State Duma deputy Andrei Kokoshin, former Secretary of the Russian Security Council, said at the time that "The US-193 spy satellite shooting by a U.S. missile may result in a new stage in space
militarization."

"[T]he satellite was shot down as an act of political demonstration of America's capacities and confirmation of the American 'free hand' policy of the use of force in outer-space and the development of anti-satellite weaponry." [19]

Last month the Pentagon announced plans to integrate its latest generation drone, the Reaper – "one of several projects aimed at monitoring enemy missiles just after launch" [20] – into the global missile shield system.

In the words of a Defense Department official, "It gives you a great capability from hundreds and hundreds of kilometers away to be able to view a missile launch and actually track it and provide data to our shooters to intercept."

According to the new head of the Missile Defense Agency, Lt. Gen. Patrick O'Reilly, "By studying the missile in its early stage of flight, the drones could provide data that would allow the incoming weapon to be destroyed." [21]

Also in July it was reported in a news story called "Tomahawk Being Re-tooled as Ship-killer" that "Raytheon Missile Systems wants to turn its land-attack Tomahawk missile into a ship killer that can do something never done before: Hit a cruising warship from a thousand miles away," with one of the intended targets being China.

"The Chinese…began producing a lot of mobile ballistic missile launchers about a decade ago….[T]hese tactical missiles are deployed in bunkers close enough to the coast to be destroyed by a longer-range, more powerful Tomahawk. U.S. Navy missile that cruises hundreds of miles over land to blow up buildings is being redesigned in Tucson to chase down moving targets." [22]

On July 22 Israel tested its Arrow II interceptor missile, jointly developed with the U.S., off the coast of California and "In a test involving three U.S. missile interceptors, Arrow tracked a target missile dropped from a C-17 aircraft." [23]

The various stages of the layered interceptor missile system depend upon radar and surveillance facilities and satellites on earth and in space. Missile shield deployments – missiles and radar – already exist in Alaska and its Aleutian Islands, Greenland, Britain, Norway, Japan, South Korea and Australia and are planned for Poland (missiles) and the Czech republic (radar).

But those sites only represent the beginning phases of a far most ambitious grid around the world as well as in space.

Last September the U.S. Senate allocated $89 million for "the activation and deployment of the AN/TPY-2 forward-based X-band radar [the same type to be deployed in the Czech Republic] to a classified location."

A Russian news source commented on this move:

"The 'classified location' is not a complete secret.

“Lt. Gen. Henry Obering, [then] director of the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), has said more than once that Turkey, Georgia and even Ukraine could be future locations for ballistic missile defense systems.

“[T]he Pentagon will most likely choose Turkey or, some Western analysts say, Israel or Japan.

“Russia has told Washington more than once that no fence of antimissiles near its border would save the United States from a retaliatory strike by missiles capable of evading ABM as well as by air and naval systems.” [24]

Washington has in fact chosen all of the above-named nations and others as well.

Last March Pentagon chief Robert Gates visited Turkey to hold consultations on missile shield plans. A Turkish report on the meeting stated “A powerful, ‘forward based’ X-band radar station could go in southeastern Europe, possibly in Turkey, the Caucasus or the Caspian Sea region, Lt. Gen. Henry Obering, head of Pentagon’s Missile Defense Agency, told a defense conference in Washington on Feb. 12.” [25]

Two months later it was revealed that “the United States may deploy a high-frequency X-band radar in Georgia.” [26]

In 2008 the U.S. also substantially boosted its interceptor plans for Japan and it was announced that “Japan and the United States are erecting the world’s most complex ballistic missile defense shield, a project that is changing the security balance in Asia and has deep implications for Washington’s efforts to pursue a similar strategy in Europe….” [27]

The Pentagon and the Japanese military are working on an early warning system “of the kind provided by the Joint Tactical Ground Station, or JTAG [which the U.S. also operates in Germany, Qatar and South Korea], and another state-of-the-art X-band radar station recently deployed” to Japan. [28]

The preceding month, December of 2007, Japan became the first nation after the U.S. to shoot a missile out of the air with an Aegis-linked Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) in a test off Hawaii.

In June of 2008 the U.S. Strategic Command completed a study on the deployment of Forward-Based X-band Radars.

A U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command spokesman said of the study that it would “coordinate and recommend to [Office of the Secretary of Defense-policy] a strategy for AN/TPY-2 radar employment, supporting worldwide ballistic missile defense capabilities in the period 2008-2012.” [29]

In 2006 the U.S. deployed Forward-Based X-band [FBX] radar to a Japanese Air Self-Defense Force base northeast of Tokyo and as of last year additionally planned to “deploy an FBX radar to Europe” and Juneau, Alaska and is “working to integrate tracks from the FBX radar into the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense system….”

“All Ballistic Missile Defense System radars – including the upgraded early warning radars at Beale Air Force Base, CA, Fylingdales Royal Air Base in the United Kingdom, Thule Air Base in Greenland and the Cobra Dane radars in Alaska – the Sea-Based X-band radar, and all

AN/TPY-2 radars (both forward-based and THAAD Fire Units) will now be managed under one program office." [30]

The Pentagon is also still planning to modify its X-band radar on the
Kwajalein Atoll in the Pacific and relocate it to the Czech Republic in conjunction with the deployment of ten interceptor missiles in Poland.

An Israeli daily newspaper recently reported that the U.S. and the Israeli Defense Forces will hold a joint missile defense exercise in October, Juniper Cobra, "during which the American-made Aegis and THAAD defense systems will deploy in Israel for the first time." [31]

Earlier exercises were held at the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany.

"Israel received the advanced X-Band radar in October as a farewell gift from the Bush administration to beef up Israeli defenses….The radar is deployed in southern Israel near the Nevatim Air Force Base and is reportedly capable of tracking small targets from thousands of kilometers away." [32]

Thousands of kilometers away means surveillance of not only Syria and Iran but a large swathe of southern Russia.

This January the U.S. Air Force established a provisional Global Strike Command which was fully activated on August 7. It has subsumed the Air Combat Command and the Air Force Space Command and in the words of Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz it will "organize, train and equip America's ICBMs and nuclear-capable bombers…."

Air Force Secretary Michael Donley said the new command will "bring together the Air Force bomber force and intercontinental ballistic missiles under a single commander." [33]

Reacting to this consolidation, streamlining and upgrading of American global nuclear strike potential, on August 11 the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Air Force, the same Alexander Zelin cited earlier on the threat of U.S. strikes from space on all of his nation, said that the "Russian Air Force is preparing to meet the threats resulting from the creation of the Global Strike Command in the U.S. Air Force" and that Russia is developing "appropriate systems to meet the threats that may arise." [34]

A change in the American White House, the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s and the mounting costs in both dollars and lives of the war in Afghanistan have not slowed down the U.S.'s plans for military domination of the planet and in outer space; nor have they lessened the threat of an unprecedented catastrophe resulting from the designs by the United States and its allies in Europe and Asia to establish an impenetrable international missile shield that would leave two of the world's nuclear powers, Russia and China, targets for coercion and first strike conventional and nuclear attacks.

Notes

1) Alabama.com, August 13, 2009
2) Wall Street Journal, August 14, 2009
3) Alabama.com, August 13, 2009
4) Wall Street Journal, August 14, 2009

5) Ibid
6) The Engineer (Britain), October 17, 2008
7) Press TV, August 15, 2009
8) Russian Information Agency Novosti, November 10, 2008
9) Foreign Affairs, March/April 2006
10) Russian Information Agency Novosti, August 11, 2009
11) Agence France-Presse, August 11, 2009
12) Associated Press, August 12, 2009
13) Ibid
14) Huntsville Times, August 17, 2009
15) Associated Press, July 30, 2009
16) Ibid
17) Honolulu Advertiser, July 29, 2009
18) Reuters, February 17, 2008
19) Interfax, February 21, 2008
20) Global Security Network, July 17, 2009
21) Ibid
22) Arizona Daily Star, July 17, 2009
23) Reuters, July 22, 2009
24) Russian Information Agency Novosti, September 12, 2008
25) Turkish Daily News, March 12, 2008
26) Nezavisimaya Gazeta, May 14, 2008
27) Associated Press, January 28, 2008
28) Ibid
29) Inside Defense, June 18, 2008
30) Ibid
31) Jerusalem Post, July 23, 2009
32) Ibid
33) U.S. Department of Defense, American Forces Press Service, August 7, 2009
34) Interfax-Military, August 11, 2009
