

Remarks by  
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4<sup>th</sup> Annual Missile Defense Conference  
Ronald Reagan Building &  
International Trade Center  
Washington, D.C.  
Tuesday – March 21, 2006

General Obering, ladies and gentleman, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak about an old topic from a new vantage point.

Having worked for many years on the technological challenges associated with missile defense, and now having to look at it from the perspective of my current position, I must admit a shift in view, but not, I might add, a diminution of interest.

I no longer have the luxury of focusing just on the missile defense problem.

Today's Naval forces face a broad spectrum of challenges as they support the Global War on Terror and as we work to transform them for the future.

Today's Fleet activities run the gamut from projecting air power over Iraq and Afghanistan ... to protecting oil shipments in the Persian Gulf ... to counter piracy operations off the Horn of Africa ... to humanitarian support from Louisiana to Pakistan and to the Philippines. And future missions span the spectrum from blue water to riverine operations - conducted worldwide.

Uncertainty—great uncertainty—is the fundamental problem we face in thinking about how we should structure our Naval forces.

Indeed, dealing with uncertainty is the inescapable strategic imperative of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

And missile threats are significant elements of that uncertainty.

Consider the following.

The proliferation of missile technology in recent years is undeniable—and alarming.

Imagine how the world looked a decade ago, just five years after the demise of the Soviet empire.

Who could have imagined the extent of technology proliferation that we have seen over the past ten years?

As will be discussed elsewhere during this conference, it is indeed sobering to consider the leaps and bounds in missile technology that North Korea, Iran, and Pakistan have either developed on their own, or acquired through various means.

What will the next ten years bring?

Who can possibly predict with certainty the dangers and advances in technology that will come to fruition in the decade to come?

In addition to the reality of proliferation is the fact that—as you already know—many bad actors are getting into the game—including countries with leaders who openly and frequently threaten to wipe a neighboring country off the map.

Given these data points and trends, we do not know precisely from where a missile attack may come.

We do not know what kind of threat we might face—it could be short-range, long-range, or something in between.

Not only that, but it could be land-based or sea-based.

And we do not know where it will be targeted—our civilian population, critical infrastructure in CONUS, our deployed forces, coalition partners, or other interests overseas.

Thus, we face many uncertainties.

There is, therefore, a natural alignment between the Navy and missile defense.

The flexibility of sea-based defense fits in with uncertainty.

The inherent advantages of the Navy in providing for defense against this kind of threat are well-known.

Sea-based defenses offer clear advantages in the context of a world with evolving worldwide threats.

Our Navy operates on over 70 percent of the world's surface, without I might add, a permission slip.

The US Navy is also a leader from a technical standpoint.

Aegis constitutes the leading edge among proven technologies in the air defense field.

And modifications of existing Aegis platforms with open architecture is a natural extension of the air defense missions that we currently perform.

Moreover, the Navy has long experience thinking about threats in the context of layered defenses.

And those layers need not be only American.

Missile defense presents an opportunity to cooperate with other nations that share a common interest in maritime security.

But there are significant challenges ahead.

The overarching question is this: How do you fit missile defense into the broad spectrum of Navy missions and Concepts of Operations?

This question has not been answered adequately.

Is global missile defense going to be another mission performed by Carrier Strike Groups or Expeditionary Strike Groups - or is it going to be a unique mission with a dedicated platform as was done with the Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarine Force?

This question must be answered in the context of the current force-sizing dilemma.

The US Navy currently is operating 281 ships and yet estimates that it will take 313 ships to satisfy the QDR requirements – not counting any expansion of the current, very limited, missile defense mission set.

The challenge of how to fund such a fleet expansion is further complicated by the costs of these ships, running several billions of dollars for future surface combatants such as DDX.

The net of this challenge is that to meet the battle force requirements of the 2020 timeframe, the shipbuilding account, expected to be \$8.7 billion in FY 07, needs to rise to an average level of \$13.4 billion a year, within an increasingly pressured budgetary environment.

My personal assessment is that we will not be able to afford a dedicated force—the SSBN model—in the current budgetary environment.

Or for that matter in any budget environment I can currently envision.

Now, that may change.

But absent any dramatic events to change the political equation, the money is just not there, and I do not see it happening anytime soon.

To fund a dedicated force would require additional resources on the order of tens of billions of dollars.

And that would only cover the cost of the platforms.

Since that option is not readily available, the challenge, therefore, is this:

How do we leverage the Navy's currently programmed and planned investments to do both the missile defense mission and the missions the Navy is already committed to?

Clearly, there is a need to develop an integrated Concept of Operations.

Here, a true partnership is required.

The CONOPS needs to be crafted by the Combatant Commanders, and their component commands, including Naval assets in the full range of missions —supporting Global Missile Defense, Regional Missile Defense, and Theatre Missile Defense.

At present, current and future Navy platforms such as CG(X) are envisioned as parts of Theatre Missile Defense, but they can provide significant value added as part of Regional and Global CONOPS as well.

From the Navy's perspective we simply cannot afford to build single dimension platforms to accommodate missile defenses.

We want to retain the flexibility to aggregate and disaggregate assets to perform the full spectrum of combat missions assigned to Naval forces.

Air and missile defense will certainly be a part of what the Navy does.

But, at the same time, we must be able to carry out traditional offensive and defensive missions in support of Carrier Strike Groups and Expeditionary Strike Groups using missile defense platforms.

So where does that leave us?

The Missile Defense Agency and the Navy have developed a positive and productive relationship.

We need to build on that relationship.

But we have not yet arrived at an understanding and agreement regarding how missile defense will fit in with the set of missions the Navy has already committed to performing.

As we integrate missile defense further into Naval platforms and CONOPS, the MDA-Navy partnership will become increasingly important.

That partnership is pushing us towards a tipping point that will require decisions about the Navy's role in missile defense, decisions that will have enormous impact on future budgets and security.

As a developmental agency, MDA is coping with the effort to operationalize its programs—in conjunction with the COCOMs and their service components.

The Navy is very interested in staying ahead of events, and would like to prevent missile defense from being events-driven.

There is a need for an open, extended debate over these important choices we, as a nation, will make in the coming decades.

All that said, permit me some personal prognostications.

As we look to the future, I envision the Navy, inevitably, playing a greater role in missile defense.

With so much uncertainty with respect to enemy intentions and capabilities, this nation will inevitably turn to sea-based defenses because of the natural advantages of mobility, flexibility, and coverage provided by sea-based systems.

Naval forces will therefore be a key player in the national effort to redress our current vulnerabilities.

There are some truly exciting developments in technology currently underway, and a number of them are potential game-changers for sea based missile defenses.

One other factor we should never lose sight of is that the key ingredient behind all the technological wonders and dazzling capabilities will always be *people*.

There is no substitute for talent, and the nation is truly fortunate to be blessed with so much scientific and engineering talent—many of those who provide it are, I know, in this room today.

Talent alone is not enough, however.

It also requires vision—vision and the drive to turn visionary plans into concrete results.

You are all playing an important part in one of the greatest strategic challenges this nation has ever faced.

Defending freedom, defending the American way of life, defending the American people from dangers—these are noble missions, and I am certainly proud to be a part of it.

There is much work to be done, but I am deeply confident in our ability to meet the challenges that confront us.

Thank you.