

September 1, 2016

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2208 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen McCain and Thornberry and Ranking Members Reed and Smith:

We write to share with you our view about a matter currently before your conference committee, specifically, the proposed changes to the National Missile Defense Act of 1999.

You are no doubt aware that, recently, North Korea demonstrated a submarine-launched intermediate range ballistic missile capability – this capability was apparently developed in near record time by one of the most economically sanctioned regimes on Earth. The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to develop its ballistic missile capability and adds to what is estimated to be the largest ballistic missile inventory in the world. What’s more, Russia and China are actively testing new hypersonic boost-glide based weapons that may have both conventional and nuclear warheads and against which it is believed the U.S. has no defensive capability.

If ever it was the case, there is no longer a “limited” ballistic missile threat to the homeland. Unfortunately, our foundational policies have not kept pace with the threat. Indeed, the National Missile Defense Act of 1999 has not been updated in 17 years, since before the United States withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, before the United States demonstrated the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system, and certainly before our relationship with Russia and China collapsed.

As former directors of the Missile Defense Agency, and its predecessors, we feel obliged to share our view that the language in the House and Senate National Defense Authorization Acts for FY17 is a much-needed updated of a long-outdated, but well-intentioned, policy for national missile defense. We believe that in a day when our adversaries, even North Korea and Iran, are anything but limited, it makes no sense for the United States to limit the options that it might consider for its defense from ballistic missile attack.

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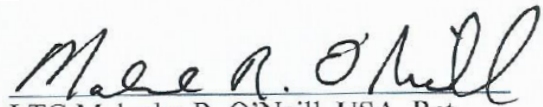
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We have seen, first hand, the impacts of such a limited ballistic missile policy—the options for the defense of the United States not pursued. We can no longer afford to be constrained by such a policy. We urge your support for a policy, such as that proposed in the House or Senate NDAAs, that recognizes the dangers our nation faces and the defenses we must develop.

Sincerely,



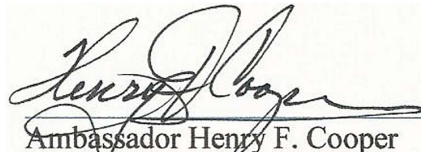
Lt Gen Henry A. Obering III, USAF, Ret.
Director, Missile Defense Agency
2004-2008



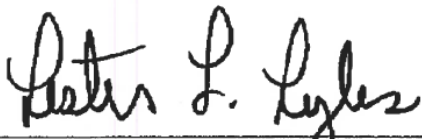
LTG Malcolm R. O'Neill, USA, Ret.
Director, Ballistic Missile Defense
Organization
1993-1996



Lt Gen Ronald T. Kadish, USAF, Ret.
Director, Missile Defense Agency
1999-2004



Ambassador Henry F. Cooper
Director, Strategic Defense Initiative
Organization, 1990-1993



Gen Lester L. Lyles, USAF, Ret.
Director, Ballistic Missile Defense
Organization
1996-1999



Lt Gen James Abrahamson, USAF, Ret.
Director, Strategic Defense Initiative
Organization, 1984-1989