

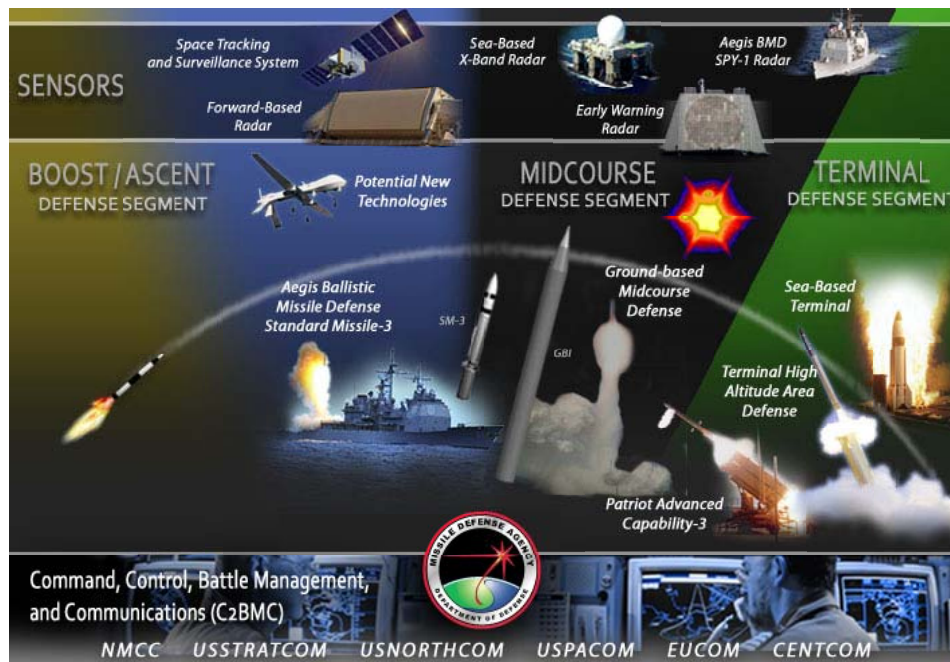
THE BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM (BMDS)

The System

- Threat
- Elements
- Supporting Efforts
- International Cooperation

It is the policy of the United States to deploy as soon as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack (whether accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate) with funding subject to the annual authorization of appropriations and the annual appropriation of funds for National Missile Defense.

— National Missile Defense Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-38)



Please click on a portion of the graphic above to learn more about that element of the Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS).

Missile defense technology being developed, tested and deployed by the United States is designed to counter ballistic missiles of all ranges—short, medium, intermediate and long. Since ballistic missiles have different ranges, speeds, size and performance characteristics, the Ballistic Missile Defense System is an integrated, "layered" architecture that provides multiple opportunities to destroy missiles and their warheads before they can reach their targets. The system's architecture includes:

- networked sensors and ground- and sea-based radars for target detection and tracking
- ground- and sea-based interceptor missiles for destroying a ballistic missile using either the force of a direct collision, called "hit to kill" technology, or an explosive blast fragmentation warhead
- a command and control, battle management, and communications network providing the warfighter with the needed links between the sensors and interceptor missiles

Missile defense elements are operated by United States military personnel from U.S. Strategic Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Forces Japan, U.S. European Command and others. The United States has missile defense cooperative programs with a number of allies, including United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, Israel, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Poland, Italy and many others. The Missile Defense Agency also actively participates in NATO activities to maximize opportunities to develop an integrated NATO ballistic missile defense capability.

[top of page]