

## Dialogue with US on Missile Defence

### Introduction

- 5.1 Australia, like many other countries, is concerned at the destabilising effect of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and of their delivery systems, such as ballistic missiles.<sup>1</sup> This threat, combined with that of global terrorism, requires a range of policies and tools that go beyond the traditional need for a strong defence force.
- 5.2 In late 2003, Australia agreed in principle to greater participation in the US Missile Defence program. Since then, Australia has been working with the US to determine the most appropriate forms of Australian participation in the program. In the immediate aftermath of the announcement of Australia's involvement there was some debate in Australia and the region concerning the Missile Defence program in general, and Australia's current and potential future involvement. This level of debate has not been sustained but the issue remains worthy of consideration in the context of this report.

### The nature of modern Missile Defence

- 5.3 Missile Defence is a non-nuclear defensive system that is not intended to threaten other states. Its purpose is to negate the threat of ballistic missiles and discourage other states from investing in ballistic missile systems.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 10.

2 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Strategic Insights 5, Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 2.

Therefore, Missile Defence can 'strengthen deterrence by limiting the options for aggressive behaviour' by states with small or undeveloped missile programs.<sup>3</sup>

- 5.4 Since the end of the cold war WMD and their means of delivery, such as ballistic missiles, have undergone considerable change. Despite the efforts of the international community, the number of states that have access to ballistic missile technology has increased and there are now a range of states with 'many different levels of capability, in areas such as range, warhead and decoys.'<sup>4</sup>
- 5.5 In the Asia Pacific region concern over the proliferation of WMD and the development of delivery systems has centred largely on North Korea, where only staggered progress has been made in developing diplomatic solutions, but importantly the number of systems that might be possessed by such a nation are likely to be small.
- 5.6 Developing a Missile Defence system is not easy. The capabilities required are extensive, diverse and include a highly complex and integrated 'system of systems'. System components include:
- intelligence;
  - early warning;
  - tracking and interception of missiles during the boost, mid-course and terminal phases of their trajectories; and
  - a highly responsive command and control system.<sup>5</sup>
- 5.7 It is worth noting that despite significant investment of both time and money the US has achieved only partial success with its Missile Defence program.
- 5.8 As a direct result of the difficulties with the technology, the US Missile Defence plans have changed since the cold war years. The Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI or 'Star Wars') was intended to deter or defeat an attack by thousands of warheads, probably from the former Soviet Union. The goal of today's missile defence program is limited to defend against tens of missiles and warheads<sup>6</sup> from states such as North Korea. The US Ambassador stated:

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3 Dr Carl Ungerer, University of Queensland, *Submission 2*, p. 3.

4 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 2.

5 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 3.

6 Therefore it is misleading to use the term 'son of Star Wars' to describe the current US Missile Defence program. Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 2.

In the 1980s we were talking about strategic missile defence, that we were trying to have a deterrent for the Soviet Union or China per se. What we are talking about here is a very limited defensive system that would deter a rogue state from launching a handful of missiles. This missile system could be quickly overcome by the great powers because they have enough capacity to overcome it. But what we seek is more security from the attack of the rogue state that might have a handful of weapons and might try to blackmail us or blackmail our allies into doing something not in our own interest.<sup>7</sup>

- 5.9 The US Missile Defence program is intended to defend the US homeland, its friends and allies, and deployed forces overseas.<sup>8</sup> Current plans include the development and deployment of a broad range of sensors, trackers and interceptors, with a focus on putting a modest level of capability into service in the short term, and thereafter, higher levels of capability.<sup>9</sup>

## Allied involvement

- 5.10 The US has emphasised that the Missile Defence program will be structured to encourage the participation of friends and allies, and that cooperation is proposed at either government to government or industry to industry contracting/subcontracting level.<sup>10</sup> The levels of interest and participation are left to each ally to determine.<sup>11</sup> To date, both the British and Japanese Governments have made commitments to work with the US on Missile Defence.
- 5.11 On 12 June 2003, the United Kingdom signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the US on Ballistic Missile Defence which established a basis for industry participation.<sup>12</sup>

The UK stated that the decision did not commit the Government to any greater participation in the US Missile Defence Program but kept open the prospect of acquiring such capabilities in the future.<sup>13</sup>

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7 HE Mr Thomas Schieffer, US Ambassador to Australia, 21 June 2004, *Transcript*, p. 13.

8 US Government, *Submission 7*, p. 7. See also Dr Ron Huisken, *Submission 10*, pp. 6-7 and Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 2.

9 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 4.

10 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 11.

11 US Government, *Submission 7*, p. 7.

12 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 11.

13 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 11.

- 5.12 Defence stated that a number of European aerospace companies have also expressed an interest in participating in the Missile Defence Program and have signed MOUs with Boeing to investigate possible areas for cooperation.<sup>14</sup>
- 5.13 Japan already has some key elements of a Missile Defence system and has sought a major commitment to Missile Defence in its future budget proposals. Defence stated:
- Missile Defence, in light of the missile and nuclear threat from North Korea, is a major element in changing Japanese defence posture, which is increasingly recognising the need for Japan to enhance its defence capabilities.<sup>15</sup>

## Australia's role

- 5.14 Australia has a history of cooperation with the US in Missile Defence. For over 30 years the Joint Defence Facilities, formerly at the Joint Defence Facility at Nurrungar and now as the Relay Ground Station (RGS) at Pine Gap, have been involved in detecting the launch of ballistic missiles.<sup>16</sup> Defence stated:
- This has been a major contribution to strategic stability, and to the detection of the launch of theatre ballistic missiles (for example Iraq's use of SCUD missiles to attack Iraq during the first Gulf War).<sup>17</sup>
- 5.15 The RGS currently supports the Defence Support Program (DSP) satellites. It is planned that the DSP satellites will be supplemented by Space-Based Infra-Red System (SBIRS) within a few years, providing an enhanced Ballistic Missile Early Warning capability. Defence stated that under a formal arrangement with the US, Australia will continue to be involved in the mission. Moreover, that the RGS at Pine Gap has been designed to accept data from the DSP and SBIRS satellites, and that the ballistic missile launch early warning information could be used in any US Missile Defence system.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, Australia will continue to have an integral role in Missile Defence for as long as Australia continues its involvement in the DSP and SBIRS programs.<sup>19</sup>

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14 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 11.

15 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 12.

16 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 12. See also Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, pp. 2-3.

17 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 12.

18 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 12.

19 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 4.

- 5.16 Defence stated that Australian involvement in the DSP system also 'includes a presence at the central processing facility in the US and some research and development conducted by the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO).'<sup>20</sup>
- 5.17 On 4 December 2003 the Minister for Defence announced that Australia had 'agreed in principle to greater participation in the US Missile Defence program.'<sup>21</sup> The Minister stated 'Australia was working with the US to determine the most appropriate forms of Australian participation that will not only be in our strategic defence interests but also provide maximum opportunities for Australian industry.'<sup>22</sup> The Government's decision was guided by its assessment of Australia's strategic interests. Specifically, it 'considered the security of Australian interests in the longer term, in a global and regional environment made less certain by the threat from the proliferation of WMD and of ballistic missile capabilities.'<sup>23</sup>
- 5.18 In February 2004 Defence stated Australia had not yet committed to any specific activity or level of participation in the US program.<sup>24</sup> Specifically, the mechanisms to progress cooperation had been discussed, including the option of establishing a working group and developing an MOU. Defence stated:
- They could include:
- expanded cooperation in Ballistic Missile Early Warning activities;
  - acquisition of, or other cooperation in the fields of, ship-based and ground-based sensors;
  - cooperation in the exploitation and handling of data from sensors; and
  - science and technology research, development, testing and evaluation.<sup>25</sup>
- 5.19 Defence stated that at this stage, Australia 'does not envisage a "missile shield" that could provide comprehensive protection against all forms of missile attack on Australian population centres.'<sup>26</sup> Further:
- The cost of such a system would be prohibitive. But by participating in the system, Australia will contribute to global and

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20 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 12.

21 Senator the Hon Robert Hill, *Media Release*, 4 December 2003.

22 Senator the Hon Robert Hill, *Media Release*, 4 December 2003.

23 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 10.

24 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 10.

25 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 12.

26 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 11.

regional security, and to the security of Australia and its deployed forces, and to those of its friends and allies.<sup>27</sup>

- 5.20 The US Government stated that the 'framework agreement currently under negotiation will provide Australia the opportunity to explore areas of interest to itself.'<sup>28</sup>
- 5.21 Missile Defence should not be expected to generate large financial costs for Australia over the next decade as the program is 'still in its infancy, and Australia would not be purchasing hardware until a more effective and proven capability has evolved.'<sup>29</sup>

## **Advantages for Australia**

- 5.22 The advantages of Australia's dialogue with the US on Missile Defence have been clearly reported in the inquiry's evidence. These broadly include: the defence of Australia and Australian forces deployed overseas; greater deterrence; opportunities for scientific and industry participation in research and manufacture; development of policy and strategy; and the ability to contribute to the direction of the US Missile Defence program. The evidence to the inquiry addressing these points is broadly discussed in the following paragraphs.

## **Defence of Australia and Australian forces deployed overseas**

- 5.23 While Australia does not face immediate threat from ballistic missiles, the Government believed it was necessary to address possible future threats to Australia and Australian forces deployed overseas.<sup>30</sup> Defence stated:

Missiles are attractive to many nations as they can be used as an asymmetric counter to traditional military capabilities. Ballistic missiles have been used in several recent conflicts, including the 1991 Gulf War, the Afghan Civil War, the war in Chechnya, and the recent war in Iraq. Of particular concern, many countries with questionable commitment to non-proliferation are also developing WMD-capable missiles of increasing range and sophistication.

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27 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 11.

28 US Government, *Submission 7*, p. 8.

29 Dr Ron Lyon, Lecturer and Ms Lesley Seebeck, PhD candidate, University of Queensland, *Submission 4*, p. 7.

30 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 10 and Senator the Hon Robert Hill, *Media Release*, 4 December 2003.

Some of these countries are actively assisting others with such programs.<sup>31</sup>

- 5.24 Many states in the broader region have nuclear missile capabilities or programs including China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea. However, as Dr Richard Brabin-Smith stated, 'it is difficult to conclude that the risk of attack would warrant major investment in Australia's own missile defences.'<sup>32</sup> The most credible threat would be against ADF deployments to distant theatres, and Australia could 'reasonably expect the US to provide theatre defence for any off-shore operation needing protection against ballistic missile attack.'<sup>33</sup>
- 5.25 The majority of the evidence to the inquiry supported the Australian Government's current approach and that Missile Defence and 'other defence measures against these possible threats should continue to be investigated.'<sup>34</sup>

## Greater deterrence

- 5.26 Deterrence resulting from the Australia-US alliance is particularly significant for Australia. Evidence to the inquiry supported the theory that this element would be enhanced through Australia's greater participation in the Missile Defence program. Dr Brabin-Smith recognised the strategic implications and stated:

There can be no doubt that an effective missile defence system would raise the threshold for serious entry into the club of proliferates or rogue states. This would do more to decrease the prospect of proliferation than to increase it.<sup>35</sup>

- 5.27 Dr Ron Huisken also states that 'Australia's decision to join the US missile defence program will make us a more direct player in this very big league'.<sup>36</sup>

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31 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 11.

32 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 6.

33 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 6.

34 Brigadier John Essex Clark (Retd), Returned and Services League of Australia Ltd, 26 March 2004, *Transcript*, p. 30.

35 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 7.

36 Dr Ron Huisken, Australian National University, *Submission 10*, p. 7.

## Opportunities for scientific and industry participation in research and manufacture

- 5.28 Australia's greater participation in the Missile Defence program could generate opportunities for Australian industry, as has been experienced previously. For example, the Minister stated Australia's 'decision last year to invest in the systems development and demonstration phase of the Joint Strike Fighter program is already paying dividends, with nine contracts awarded to Australian companies to date.'<sup>37</sup>
- 5.29 Greater participation could also generate important opportunities to build on the strength of the relationship in defence science. Enhanced engagement with the US on this issue would provide Australian science and industry with the opportunity to participate in research and manufacture at levels previously not addressed.<sup>38</sup> The US Government stated:
- Australia's participation in Missile Defence will enable the Australian Government to see and consider the entire array of systems and programs that form a layered defense against all ranges of missiles at every party of the trajectory of an offensive missile (boost, mid-course, and terminal phases).<sup>39</sup>
- 5.30 Conversely, Australia has a 'variety of niche industrial capabilities of interest to the United States for its own defence, such as radar, sensor and data fusion technologies.'<sup>40</sup> Dr Carl Ungerer stated 'Australia is well placed to offer technical support and assistance to the development of US missile defence systems for existing capabilities such as the joint facilities of Pine Gap and the Jindalee over the horizon radar.'<sup>41</sup>
- 5.31 The opportunities to conduct more joint scientific investigations, could add to Australia's understanding of Missile Defence, and of 'advanced defence technologies more generally, and add a contemporary dimension to our relationship with the US.'<sup>42</sup>
- 5.32 In addition Defence stated 'Such capabilities and technologies are of considerable interest for our own application in intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and defensive systems - even if these are not oriented towards defence against ballistic missiles.'<sup>43</sup>

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37 Senator the Hon Robert Hill, *Media Release*, 4 December 2003.

38 Future Directions International, *Submission 3*, pp. 19-20.

39 US Government, *Submission 7*, p. 8.

40 US Government, *Submission 7*, p. 8.

41 Dr Carl Ungerer, Lecturer, University of Queensland, 7 April 2004, *Transcript*, p. 3.

42 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 8.

43 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 12.



## Development of policy and strategy

5.33 Evidence to the inquiry recognised that Missile Defence would need to be part of a much broader array of policy tools and instruments to reduce the threat of ballistic missile proliferation. The FDI US-Australia Foundation considered this advantageous and stated:

The implications of Australia's dialogue with the US on cooperation in ABM programs primarily include the opportunity that Australia should be able to develop the technical understandings to create credible strategies and policies for defence against potential missile/nuclear threats to Australia.<sup>44</sup>

## Ability to contribute to the direction of the US Missile Defence program

5.34 Importantly, Australia could also play a useful role contributing to the development of the approach by the US to address regional interests and concerns about Missile Defence.<sup>45</sup>

## Disadvantages and domestic perceptions

5.35 Some evidence to the inquiry highlighted the potential disadvantages of the US Missile Defence program in general. The primary concern raised was that the program could in fact threaten international peace and security, and 'lead to the further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and missiles and other means for their delivery.'<sup>46</sup> Professor Paul Dibb stated for example:

What else does China have? It has 20 intercontinental ballistic missiles. If I were in Beijing, I would look at the ballistic missile shield of 40 interceptors in the US and say: 'I don't know whether I believe the Americans will stop at 40. They have enormously impressive technology and, if it is successful, it could effectively disarm China.' If that were the case, my concern would be that that would lead to a regional arms race, with China proliferating missiles and warheads, India reacting in turn and Pakistan

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44 Future Directions International, *Submission 3*, p. 19.

45 Mr Peter Jennings, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Submission 11*, p. 12.

46 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, *Submission 17*, p.5 and Medical Association for Prevention of War, Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 7.

reacting in turn to that. At very least, we should be debating this issue and not just be accepting everything we are told.<sup>47</sup>

- 5.36 However, as Dr Brabin-Smith stated 'it is difficult to determine whether Australia's involvement in or potential acquisition of defences against ballistic missiles would prompt an arms race in our immediate region.'<sup>48</sup>
- 5.37 Other concerns raised in the evidence about the Missile Defence program related to the weakening of international obligations and understandings. WILPF stated that the Missile Defence system 'not only violates the 1967 UN Outer Space Treaty but also required the abrogation by the US' of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.'<sup>49</sup> WILPF continued, 'Australia should not condone, be a party to, or cooperate with any nation that violated the Outer Space Treaty or puts its own interests above the collective interests of every other country.'<sup>50</sup> In addition, the 'demise of the ABM treaty has lifted all restrictions on this development program, and left other states reliant solely on US statement of intent regarding the scale of deployments.'<sup>51</sup>
- 5.38 The Medical Association for Prevention of War, (MAPW) Australia is concerned by the lack of debate about this important policy issue by both the Parliament and in public. They state:
- ...the extent of that debate seems to have been very small, what was not stated was the extraordinary fact that there has been virtually no debate in parliament on this issue. It is difficult to comprehend how an agreement between Australia and the US of such significance to the security of Australians could have been deemed unworthy of any significant discussion in parliament.
- 5.39 MAPW, WILPF and the United Nations Association of Australia Incorporated (UNAA) requested that the Government reverse the decision for Australia to take part in the Missile Defence program.<sup>52</sup> WILPF stated that Australia should instead adopt a neutral position as this 'would be in Australia's best long-term interests, maintaining our independence and

47 Professor Paul Dibb, Chairman, Strategic and Defence Studies, ANU, 2 April 2004, *Transcript*, p. 61.

48 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, ASPI Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 5.

49 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, *Submission 17*, p. 5. See also Medical Association for Prevention of War, Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 7.

50 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, *Submission 17*, p. 5.

51 Dr Ron Huiskens, Strategic and Defence Studies, ANU, *Submission 10*, p. 7.

52 Medical Association for Prevention of War, Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 7, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, *Submission 17*, p. 5 and United Nations Association of Australia Inc, *Submission 18*, p. 4.

keeping us in line with other countries who are working toward a reduction in militarism.<sup>53</sup>

5.40 Dr Carlo Kopp and the Australia Defence Association stated that the criticism of participation in the US Missile Defence program 'appears to be centred in political issues rather than the technical and military-strategic issues of concern.'<sup>54</sup>

5.41 Concerns were also raised in the inquiry evidence in relation to the level of public knowledge, and the level of public and Parliamentary debate and scrutiny, of Australia's involvement in the US Missile Defence program. In particular, the RSL stated:

The process and results of this dialogue should be communicated openly to the Australian people and whatever decision made must be justified clearly and unambiguously in the national interest.<sup>55</sup>

5.42 Dr Brabin-Smith stated:

Because the level of missile defence capability that the US is planning is limited, it should neither upset the stability of the nuclear balance nor cause Russia or China to expand their strategic nuclear forces. But this is a key judgement. Our government needs to satisfy itself independently that this is the case, and to explain it carefully to the Australian people...<sup>56</sup>

5.43 Whilst the MAPW requested that Australia no longer be involved in the Missile Defence program, the organisation stated that 'As a preliminary step, this issue must have far greater parliamentary and public scrutiny.'<sup>57</sup> In particular, MAPW raised the following matters as those that should be addressed:

- the nature and magnitude of the missile threat to Australia;
- possible ways of responding to the threat;
- likely impact of Missile Defence on the prospects for disarmament;
- role of Pine Gap in the proposed Missile Defence system;
- likely impact of missile Defence on the security of Australians; and
- the possible social and economic costs to Australians.<sup>58</sup>

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53 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, *Submission 17*, p. 6.

54 Dr Carlo Kopp, Defence Analyst and Consulting Engineer, *Submission 9*, p. 13 and Australia Defence Association, *Submission 5*, p. 7.

55 Returned and Services League of Australia Ltd, *Submission 1*, p. 5.

56 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, Australian Strategic Policy Institute Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 7.

57 Medical Association for Prevention of War, Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 7.

58 Medical Association for Prevention of War, Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 7.

- 5.44 In addition, MAPW stated that detailed consideration should be given to the potential health and environmental consequences of the operation of the Missile Defence system. Specifically, 'the possibility of a missile being intercepted and its nuclear, biological or chemical contents being dispersed over populated (or any) areas has not even begun to be addressed.'<sup>59</sup>
- 5.45 Moreover, the WILPF stated that there is 'a sizable citizen opposition' to the Australian and Japanese Government's involvement in the Missile Defence program.<sup>60</sup>

## Regional perceptions

- 5.46 Dr Huisken stated Missile Defence is likely to be 'one of the underlying strategic developments that will shape the character of relationships critical to the security of the Asia Pacific over the longer term, notably US-China, China-Japan but possible also US-Russia.'<sup>61</sup>
- 5.47 The Australian Government does not believe that Missile Defence will threaten regional stability.<sup>62</sup> The intent of such system is defensive, not offensive and as Dr Brabin-Smith stated 'it's not as if we would be seeking to protect the advantage of our own ballistic missiles.'<sup>63</sup>
- 5.48 The US Government stated that '[m]ajor world powers understand the true intent behind the United States Government's current development and deployment of MD technology and thus, no new arms race has occurred.'<sup>64</sup> The US Ambassador stated:

I think that we have tried to consult across Asia and brief people on what missile defence is all about. I think we have largely been successful in getting the message across that it is not aimed at great powers; it is aimed at rogue states and terrorists who might acquire missile technology or a missile and then launch it. As a result of that, I think that the reaction in the region has been quite good.<sup>65</sup>

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59 Medical Association for Prevention of War, Australia, *Submission 16*, p. 7.

60 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, *Submission 17*, p. 5.

61 Dr Ron Huisken, Australian National University, *Submission 10*, p. 6.

62 Department of Defence, *Submission 6*, p. 11.

63 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, Australian Strategic Policy Institute Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 5.

64 US Government, *Submission 7*, p. 7.

65 HE Mr Thomas Schieffer, US Ambassador to Australia, 21 June 2004, *Transcript*, p. 5.

5.49 In relation to how states in the Asia-Pacific region viewed Australia's dialogue with the US on Missile Defence, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade stated 'There have been pretty much low-level reactions in the region.'<sup>66</sup>

China was at first concerned. When the United States made its announcements a couple of years ago, it was vocal in its concern, but has been pretty low key in recent times. Other countries in the region have probably been satisfied or happy to just wait and see how things develop. At this stage we do not see that there has been any negative reaction that would cause us to rethink our decisions.<sup>67</sup>

5.50 In particular, 'Indonesia has made comments of a mixed nature-some a little critical, some supportive or at least understanding.'<sup>68</sup> Dr Ungerer stated:

As I understand it, one of the principal concerns of the Indonesian government is that there could be some sort of falling debris over Indonesia as a result of any interception of missiles that may occur in the atmosphere.<sup>69</sup>

5.51 Evidence to the inquiry stated that it is important for the Australian Government to make its reasons and intentions in relation to Missile Defence clear to regional governments.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Dr Ungerer stated it was necessary to establish a 'clear set of policy directions on this issue to reassure the international community that the norms of non-proliferation behaviour and the integrity of the non-proliferation regimes will be upheld.'<sup>71</sup>

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66 Ms Susan Dietz-Henderson, Assistant Secretary, Strategic Affairs Branch, International Security Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Transcript*, p. 63.

67 Ms Susan Dietz-Henderson, Assistant Secretary, Strategic Affairs Branch, International Security Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Transcript*, p. 63.

68 Ms Susan Dietz-Henderson, Assistant Secretary, Strategic Affairs Branch, International Security Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Transcript*, p. 63.

69 Dr Carl Ungerer, Lecturer, University of Queensland, 26 March 2004, *Transcript*, p. 9.

70 Dr Richard Brabin-Smith, Australian Strategic Policy Institute Strategic Insights 5, *Australia and Ballistic Missile Defence: Our policy choices*, April 2004, p. 5. See also Returned and Services League of Australia Ltd, *Submission 1*, p. 5.

71 Dr Carl Ungerer, Lecturer, University of Queensland, *Submission 2*, p. 4.

## Alternatives to Missile Defence

5.52 The Department of Defence was asked if any alternatives existed to the types of technology being proposed by the US Missile Defence system. In response Defence stated:

The ADF currently has a range of Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, Command and Control and Air Defence and Air Warfare capabilities that both protect deployed ADF personnel and provide a significant deterrent and response capability. The ADF will acquire more such capabilities under the Defence Capability Plan, most notably the Air Warfare Destroyer, project Wedgetail, and the JSF. Achieving a level of deterrence against missile attacks comparable to that offered by the Missile Defence Program would however be more difficult and very much more costly for Australia if we were not to associate with the Missile Defence Program.<sup>72</sup>

## Conclusion

5.53 The evidence to the inquiry indicates that the support for the alliance extends to the dialogue with the US concerning greater participation in the Missile Defence program.

5.54 Limited objection to the program may also be because the system is a defensive one. Missile Defence appears to be a reasonable response to deterring the proliferation of WMD and their delivery systems. Missile development by states operating outside the international system of proliferation controls potentially becomes redundant if there is a credible Missile Defence system in place in the region, capable of destroying 10 to 20 missiles in flight. Continued dialogue therefore has 'no real disadvantage at this stage.'<sup>73</sup>

5.55 Unfortunately, investment in Missile Defence technology potentially adds to the trend of US dominance in conventional military power. In turn, this US technological dominance forces either state or non-state actors to undertake asymmetric or avoidance behaviour. If direct military attack on the US and its allies is not possible using missiles, threat forces may simply revert to unconventional methods of delivering warheads. Security forces around the world are already alert to the possibility that WMD may be moved using commercial shipping or carried across land borders in

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72 Department of Defence, *Submission 20*, p. 11.

73 Australia Defence Association, *Submission 5*, p. 7.

vehicle transport. These delivery methods do not require threat forces to directly challenge the technology advantage of the US and its allies, making them at least as likely as attack using missiles.

- 5.56 The Committee supports ongoing Australian involvement in the development of technology to defend Australia against missile attacks. Equal effort must continue to be directed to initiatives that limit the proliferation of missile and WMD technology through both diplomatic action and military interdiction where necessary.
- 5.57 Concurrently, initiatives to strengthen Australia's border security and customs arrangements must also be adequately funded. Currently less than 10% of containers arriving in Australia are subject to inspection.<sup>74</sup> While significantly higher numbers of inspections are undertaken on containers and ships arriving from countries suspected of proliferation or of supporting terrorist activities, the risk of infiltration to Australia remains real. Investment in the Missile Defence program must be balanced against investment in Container Examination Facilities (CEF) and other enhancements to border and port security. The CEFs integrate container x-ray technology with physical examination and a range of other technologies such as pallet and mobile x-ray units, ionscan technology and radiation and chemical warfare agent detectors. These mature technologies represent an important deterrent, the equal of the Missile Defence program.
- 5.58 Opinion was divided along party lines about whether Australia should continue to participate in the US Missile Defence Program to deter those states seeking to develop ballistic missile programs. Supporters of the US Missile Defence Program recognise that investment in the program needs to coincide with enhanced border protection and customs capabilities.**

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74 The Auditor General, Audit Report No. 16 2004/5, *Container Examination Facilities*, p. 3.

