

Statement by Larry D. Welch, General, USAF (Ret)
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for the
Hearing on the Missions, Roles, and Structure of the Missile Defense Agency

I am currently serving as President and CEO of the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA). The Institute for Defense Analyses is a non-profit corporation whose only business is running Federally Funded Research and Development Centers for the federal government. IDA has provided objective, independent analytical and technical support to the Department of Defense and other government agencies since our founding in 1956.

We were tasked by the Department of Defense to conduct a Congressionally mandated independent study to examine and make recommendations with respect to the long-term missions, roles, and structure of the Missile Defense Agency (MDA). IDA formed a study group with broad experience specifically in missile defense and more generally in acquisition. The Congressional language included additional specific direction to address the MDA's relations with other parts of the DoD, as relates to missile defense, improving the MDA interface with other parts of DoD, support for the warfighter, and whether there are functions and responsibilities that, in whole or in part, should be added to or removed from the MDA portfolio. The study group report includes discussion, findings and recommendations on each of these issues.

My comments in this statement reflect the consensus of the study group. If, in following discussion, I depart or move beyond the study group deliberations, I will identify the opinions as my own.

The MDA charter and mission, as defined in the January 2002 directive, is to provide centralized management to develop and integrate programs of sensors, interceptors, command and control, battle management, and communications (C2BMC) into a ballistic missile defense system (BMDS).

The specific direction to the MDA included; “. . . to deploy a set of initial missile defense capabilities beginning in 2004.” Though not specified in the directive; the objective was understood to be an initial capability to defend against a limited launch of ballistic missiles from North Korea to the U.S. homeland.

Congress did not ask the study to assess the performance of the MDA or the need for a ballistic missile defense, and the study group did not do so except to note that the MDA has met the guidance to deploy an initial capability. Further, the group noted that there has been an enduring national commitment to some level of ballistic missile defense, including direction currently embodied in law. The objectives have been pursued in a centralized organization (the MDA and its predecessors) over seven administrations and 13 congresses.

The study group also found a broad consensus within the Department of Defense, defense contractors, and the study group members that an organization like the MDA, with its special authorities and a centralized approach to management and oversight of the missile defense

program, was essential to rapidly develop and deploy the current set of ballistic missile defense capabilities.

The approach that allowed the MDA to rapidly develop and deploy an initial set of capabilities has been less successful in fostering the planning and preparation needed to adequately address future operations of deployed systems and follow-on procurement and sustainment. The mission of the MDA has evolved to include research and development, procurement, testing, initial fielding, and operating elements of the Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS). The Military Departments that will eventually assume responsibility for operating and sustaining the BMDS have not been adequately preparing to assume these responsibilities. This has made it difficult to incorporate Service perspectives and to transfer individual systems within the BMDS to the Lead Services as directed by the Department of Defense earlier this decade.

The BMDS development and initial fielding has not been subject to the traditional 5000 series acquisition directives or the Joint Capability Integration and Development System (JCIDS) and Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) approval processes. The MDA's processes for both requirements generation and acquisition have evolved over time. As currently practiced in the MDA, the capability-based approach defines a specific increment of capability to be developed and establishes criteria to determine that an increment of capability has been achieved and is available to be deployed. These increments of capability are aggregated into blocks of mission capability. The study group recommended that the capability-based and block approach as now practiced by the MDA be retained.

With the assignment of specific responsibilities for BMDS in the Unified Command Plan, USSTRATCOM has initiated and continues to develop the Warfighter Involvement Process (WIP) to better represent the combatant commands' priorities for ballistic missile defense capabilities.

To increase the involvement of other parts of DoD and to ensure appropriate oversight of BMDS development, acquisition, and procurement, the Department established the Missile Defense Executive Board (MDEB) to make recommendations to the Deputy Secretary of Defense on implementation of policies and plans, program priorities, and investment decisions. Although the MDA continues to function with special authorities, the evolution of the Department's management approach has increased control and oversight to better predict and control progress in developing, fielding, and supporting the BMDS.

While the study group agrees that there is a need to move toward more normal acquisition processes, the need for continuous evolution of the BMDS will require that the approach to setting requirements for increments of capability and developing and fielding those increments remain as special authorities with oversight by the Missile Defense Executive Board. In considering the future roles and missions of the MDA, the three most fundamental needs for an organization like the MDA with special authorities are the challenges of:

- integrating a complex set of capabilities into a cohesive system capable of responding effectively within the short timelines required to intercept ballistic missiles,

- maintaining configuration control over evolving systems provided by multiple services, and,
- providing the C2BMC system required to perform the ballistic missile defense mission.

A continuing challenge for the ballistic missile defense mission is the continuing growth of adversary capabilities using technologies available to a wide range of potential adversaries. For this reason, there needs to be a better balance between deploying more of current capabilities and research and development to meet future challenges. This is particularly true of mid-course intercept capabilities where countermeasures can greatly impact intercept engagement effectiveness. Hence the study group recommended that, with a caveat regarding the definition, the continuing primary function of the MDA should be on research and development with responsibility for follow-on procurement and operation of most ballistic missile defense systems transferring to a Lead Service. The caveat is that for a complex integrated system of systems like the BMDS, research and development for any new capability is not complete until an initial deployment demonstrates that the capability is integrated effectively into the system of systems to include effective C2BMC. Hence, research and development must include procurement and initial deployment of an increment of capability.

To provide for transition from initial deployment by the MDA to follow-on procurement and operation with continuing configuration control and integration activity, the study group recommended that a Joint Program Office (JPO) be established for each element of the BMDS. As used by the study group, examples of an element of the BMDS include the individual interceptor, sensor, and C2BMC systems. The JPO would be jointly manned by the MDA and the designated Lead Service for the system element. The JPO would report to the Director of the MDA until completion of the initial deployment, and then the JPO would report to the Lead Service Acquisition Executive. Given the evolutionary nature of the BMDS and its elements, the JPO needs to be a continuing entity for the life of the element and the MDA should retain responsibility within the JPO for the funding and conduct of research and development activity for the life of the element of the system. The MDA would also retain responsibility for C2BMC since that activity cuts across all the other elements of the BMDS. The study group had specific recommendations for the conditions and the timing for transfer of responsibility for elements of the BMDS to the Lead Service.

As noted earlier, the tasking for the study group included identifying any functions that should be removed from or added to the MDA. To reiterate, the study group recommended that the responsibilities for follow-on procurement and operation of elements of the BMDS other than C2BMC be transferred to the Services. The study group found no additional responsibilities appropriate for the MDA. As part of this latter consideration, the group recommended that the responsibility for developing and deploying defenses against cruise missiles not be assigned to the MDA. Adding this challenge to the current portfolio would not likely benefit progress in either ballistic or cruise missile defense.