



SECURING SPACE

AUSTRALIA TO PARTICIPATE IN US MISSILE DEFENCE PROGRAM

The Government has decided that Australia will participate in the United States' missile defence program, Defence Minister Robert Hill announced today.

Senator Hill said 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...

"The Government is concerned that Australia might one day be threatened by long range missiles with mass destruction

effect and believes that investment in defensive measures is important," Senator Hill said.

"Developing this capability will contribute to global, regional and Australian security by offering protection from missile attack and dissuading nations from acquiring or developing such weapons..."

Australia has had a long involvement in missile defence through... the Joint Defence Facility Nurrungar and... Pine Gap.

Extract from a media release from the Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Hill, Thursday, 4 December 2003 no. 153/2003

Australians are used to living in a country where we have only ever sent our armed forces away to war. Until the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington and the Bali bombings we have felt safe. Our safety has been helped by our geographic isolation. Now we recognise that isolation alone will not keep us safe.

Successive Australian governments have been committed to the alliance with the United States as a way of keeping us safe. We went to Vietnam, the Gulf War and Iraq alongside the US. We host US bases. Now the Australian government has expressed support for the US's proposed missile defence systems, or "star wars" as it is sometimes known.

The US claims that it is developing the Missile Defence Systems as a deterrent against missile attacks on themselves and other participating nations. The actual defence missiles will be land and sea based. Satellite communication will be an essential mechanism in launching defence missiles and directing them to the target missile.

The US claims that all this is necessary because of "rogue states" – other nations who might develop nuclear weapons and launch them on the US or allies such as Australia.

Australia is already involved in missile defence in a number of ways.

- Defence Minister Robert Hill has announced that Australia will buy three new air-warfare destroyers during the next decade for about \$6 billion. These will be used for theatre missile defence and will be stationed off the WA coast.
- Pine Gap already has a role in detecting missiles and warning the US. Its satellites cover the most important areas of US strategic interest – China, the oil fields of the Middle East and southern Russia.
- Robert Hill has also announced that Australian scientists will be involved in research, especially as Australian radar technology is relevant to the system.¹

Star wars has a second, larger meaning – weapons in space.

The new Missile Defence Systems needs to be seen in the wider context of US long term military plans. The US intends to expand its use of space for military purposes. It already uses space more than anyone else.² The US opposes any attempt to make weapons in space illegal so that they have the freedom to use space to defend their interests. They intend to keep their space technology a generation ahead of everyone else. This is clearly expressed in public military documents such as the *Air Force Space Strategic Plan*.

¹ Interview on ABC "PM", 4/12/03

² The Report of the Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organisation argues that the US should use space to defend US interests.

Some people choose weapons because they are afraid, and others are afraid of weapons and would prefer a world without them. What is your personal feeling? What facts support each view? What place do such feelings have in deciding a Christian view on star wars?

In November 2000, the United Nations adopted a resolution entitled *Prevention of An Arms Race In Outer Space*. It recognised “the common interest of all mankind (sic) in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes” and reiterated that the use of space “shall be for peaceful purpose . . . carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all countries.” Only the United States, Israel and Micronesia abstained.

IT COSTS TO DEFEND ...

What are likely to be the costs of missile defence and space weapons? Only some of the expected costs are mentioned here.

- *Huge expenditure on software development and weapons.* There is not only the cost to the US, Australia and other allies. If NMD goes ahead the aerospace industry, especially the big four corporations Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and TRW, will get very rich from it. These companies donate huge sums to the Republican Party and aggressively lobby Capitol Hill on defence spending.
- *Missed opportunities:* the money could be better spent on overcoming poverty and improving living standards in the US, Australia and the poorer countries of the world.
- *Violation of international goodwill, cooperation and trust, and the requirements of the UN charter and treaties.* The US has withdrawn from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty so it can pursue this policy in contravention of the treaty. The ABM Treaty was an agreement between the US and the USSR restricting their right to weapons to destroy incoming nuclear missiles.³ It was crucial to nuclear deterrence.
- *Undermining true peace.* Peace is violated by relying on weapons and power imbalances, instead of trust, cooperation, human development and human rights.
- *Undermining nuclear disarmament.* In the absence of missile defence shields, there has been a balance of power between countries that possessed nuclear weapons but which did not trust each other: the US and Russia, and the US and China. There are also balances of power between less well armed nations, such as India and Pakistan. A US defence shield shifts the balance of power, and other nations are likely to respond to this by increasing their nuclear arsenals.
- *New types of weapons.* It may create a new sort of arms race, to create weapons that can ignore the missile defence shield. This may include weapons that will not be detected or stopped by the missile defence system, or systems to destroy surveillance satellites.
- *Increased distrust and resentment, fuelling terrorism.* The expenditure of huge amounts of money and the colonisation of space by the US and other rich nations is likely to create resentment in many nations who are excluded.
- *Increased isolation of the US.* As the US becomes more dependent on weapons systems it will have fewer reasons to consult with and listen to other nations.
- *Environment.* Testing the missile defence system already pollutes land, air and sea at Fort Greely, where the missiles for the system are being tested. How far around the world will the pollution spread?
- *Australian independence.* Australian involvement makes us more dependent on the US and limits our future ways of relating to other nations.

Truth Australia's current military spending is over \$50 million every day.

What else could Australia do with the money it currently spends on defence, to better promote peace?

³ <http://www.state.gov/www/global/arms/treaties/abm/abm2.html>

ARE THE COSTS WORTH IT?

Both the initial missile defence shield and the use of weapons in space have very high costs that undermine both domestic security and world security.

In the 1960s to the 1980s, the world trembled at the nuclear weapons the US and the USSR pointed at each other. People in many nations feared being “collateral damage” in a nuclear holocaust touched off by political issues that did not concern them. In response to their protests, governments agreed to various treaties to limit and control nuclear weapons. Now we are moving into an era where the US claims space as a primary location of military operations – not the land on which they live, but the space which cocoons the earth, the space which we all share. This is the end of hard-won treaties and the start of a new arms race.

Creating a missile defence system squanders opportunities for world peace and security through international law and through business, cultural and diplomatic relationships with other nations.

This hugely expensive system is unlikely to protect the US or Australia from terrorist attacks or rogue states. Terrorists will simply use other mechanisms to deliver a bomb – pack it in a cargo container or a truck, for example.

The strategies create a false hope. Even at the level of policy the proposal is nonsensical, based on a false faith in computer systems as reliable and trustworthy. All software contains faults that create anomalies in operation.⁴ There is the danger of “friendly fire” – missiles killing those they are meant to defend. There is the danger of someone accidentally or deliberately firing one of the nuclear weapons on high alert.

What sort of world do you want to live in? How do you feel about nations using space as a platform for weapons? If you support these initiatives, how would you feel if it were China or Iran proposing them?

If Australia’s security in the new millennium is to be assured, the Australian Government must adopt a foreign policy commitment to friendly and mutually beneficial relations with all countries. This must be combined with an independent and non-aligned defence policy which will be efficient, affordable and genuinely serve the security needs of our country and the need for peace and stability in our region.

There is another major cost of such weapons that often goes unrecorded – the cost to the environment. Whether the weapons are fired in tests, or in combat, they pollute the earth, the seas and the air.

SECURITY COMES WITH JUSTICE

Outerspace is the common heritage of human beings. It should be used for peaceful purposes and for the economic, scientific and cultural development of all countries as well as the well-being of humankind. Space must not be filled with weapons and turned into another arena for the arms race and for warfare.

But whether they are in space or on the ground, new weapons systems will never create peace. They simply fuel resentment, fear, hatred and the next generation of weapons research and arms trade.

God gave this world to all humankind, and no one nation is entitled to act as if it owns it. Star wars is a few nations acting in an absolute fashion, as if they are entitled to determine the future of the world. This amounts to usurping the place of God. It is horrific selfishness, with a small number of nations acting as if their own security was more important than the rest of the world.

The Christian vision for the world is antithetical to star wars. God’s vision for the world is peace. The Prophet Isaiah speaks of the coming of the reign of God:

¹⁶ Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. ¹⁷ The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. ¹⁸ My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. (Isaiah 32: 16-18)

⁴ “Pentagon admits missile shield may not work – but it may be a vote winner” in *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 13-14, 2004.



Mercy Jesus Christ is our peace. In him the reign of God has begun. His work on the cross was to bring everything in heaven and on earth into unity. Christ offers us all, friend and foe, a future – the same future. We live or die together. If we resort to military technology, we agree that its use – including its use by those we consider enemies – is legitimate.

Tell your local member of parliament, and the Prime Minister, that you do not want Australia to participate in the US missile defence system. Join a peace and justice group to campaign against the arms trade, military bases and war, and advocate for a return to the purposes of the United Nations.

Community Jesus calls us to break down the barriers that separate people from each other, whether they are religious, political or socio-economic. Security in international relations is created in the same way as security in our local communities – it grows from relationship as we build trust in each other and come to a shared vision of hope for peace for everyone. There can be no trust, however, while there is such an imbalance of wealth and power in the world. This is why justice is the key to security.

Star wars invests money in military “solutions” to political problems that require social and economic solutions. True security cannot be for only a select group of nations.

Justice True security comes only when humankind sees its future as involving everyone, protecting the interests of all. The solution to ‘terror’ is not more terror, but human rights, human and social development, and a just sharing of the resources of the world. Jesus Christ calls us to be neighbours to those in need, not to surround ourselves with weapons and keep everyone else at bay.

More and more people understand that real security comes with jobs, steady food supplies, homes, clean water, warmth, education and health care, democracy and human rights. Solving unemployment, poverty, homelessness, pollution of our environment and other problems in our community is necessary for Australia’s and the world’s security.

In faithfulness to the gospel, churches in Australia and throughout the world participate in development programs and actions for justice. You can support church initiatives to end poverty through community development (NCCA Christian World Service) and cancellation of unpayable debt (Jubilee Australia).

What are positive ways in which Australia could contribute more to international peace and development?

As they said in the 1960s, there is no way to peace: peace is the way.

FINDING OUT MORE

- **Get involved** by joining a campaign – you could start by checking the websites of the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition www.anti-bases.org, the Global Network Against Weapons in Space www.space4peace.org and the Medical Association for the Prevention of War (Australia) www.mapw.org.au
- **Be inspired** by reading Hope Beyond Terror, a booklet of reflections for peace from around the world produced for the Decade to Overcome Violence by the NCCA available at the website <http://www.ncca.org.au/dov/resources> or by phoning the NCCA on (02) 9299 2215
- **Find out** more about US policy from the following websites: The US Air Force Space Strategic Plan <http://www.cdi.org/news/space-security/afspc-strategic-master-plan-04-beyond.pdf> and <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/space20010111.html>. Also The Friends Committee on National Legislation (USA) has a section on missile defence http://www.fcnl.org/issues/issue.php?issue_id=76

