

U.S. Strategic and Missile Defence Initiatives

- The U.S. Missile Defense Act of 1999 requires the United States to deploy a national missile defence system “as soon as technologically possible.”
- On May 1, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush outlined, in broad terms, his thinking about the need for a new strategic framework, as well as his views about missile defence. The new framework is intended to encourage further cuts in the nuclear arsenal, possibly unilateral cuts. The U.S. administration is conducting in-depth reviews of its strategic and defence policies, including missile defence.
- The U.S. administration wants to transform its relations with Russia, no longer basing them on mutual vulnerability or on the existing Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which the U.S. believes reflects the adversarial relationship of the Cold War. The recent shift in control of the U.S. Senate to the Democrats may affect the administration’s ability to implement its vision.
- The U.S. is consulting with friends and allies about a new strategic vision, including missile defence. Beginning the week of May 7, 2001, teams of U.S. officials visited NATO, as well as Berlin, Paris, Copenhagen, the Hague, Rome, Ankara, Warsaw, Moscow, Singapore, Seoul, Tokyo, Beijing, New Delhi and Canberra. A U.S. team consulted with Canadian officials on May 15, 2001.
- While NATO allies are so far showing a general willingness to engage the U.S. on strategic issues, including missile defence, they remain concerned about possible implications for global security. These concerns were reflected at the recent meeting of foreign ministers of NATO countries.
- Canada has not taken a position for or against U.S. plans for missile defence, but is engaged in a dialogue with the United States and other NATO allies on U.S. proposals both for a new strategic framework and for missile defence.
- Canada shares many U.S. concerns about new challenges to both national and global security, including threats from intra-state conflict, from terrorist attack, and from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including ballistic missiles.
- Missile defence may be able to play a role, but it depends on how it is pursued. It need not be incompatible with arms control and disarmament.