



Written by [James Murphy](#) on January 18, 2019

## Trump Previews New Space-based Missile Defense System

Saying that “the best way to keep America safe is to keep America strong,” President Trump unveiled plans to build a new, space-based missile defense system. Speaking at the Pentagon on Thursday, he made the case for the new system in response to upgraded weaponry of other nations.



While space-based anti-missile systems are still likely years away according to the review summary, the Pentagon believes that it must begin research and development now, in order to stay ahead of possible adversaries.

The Pentagon released the results of the administration’s missile defense review — the first such review done since 2010. The results of the review concluded that America needs to upgrade its defense systems in order to be able to quickly track and destroy the new and more maneuverable hypersonic missiles being developed by Russia and China.

Though the president didn’t mention [China](#) or [Russia](#) by name, his meaning was clear enough. The Pentagon is moving to protect America from not only existing threats, but new weapon systems currently being developed by America’s main military rivals. “Our goal is simple: to ensure that we can detect and destroy any missile launched against the United States, anywhere, anytime, any place,” President Trump said.

[Russia has reportedly developed](#) several new high-speed and highly maneuverable missiles with speeds of up to Mach 20. And over the past decade plus, China has increased military spending each year, [developing several new weapons systems](#).

[A summary of the review](#), released on Thursday, read, “Effective deterrence is the preferred strategy to prevent missiles attack ... however, a broader approach is required to address the increasingly complex missile threat environment.”

Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan, who also spoke, spelled out the reasons for a new missile defense program: “North Korea’s missiles remain a significant concern. So, do Iran’s. America’s competitors, including China and Russia, are increasing their missile systems capabilities, adding new and sophisticated missiles to their arsenals.”

Key to the new missile-detection system will be space-based sensors designed to quickly detect missile launches against the United States from anywhere in the world. Both the Pentagon and the president see space as a critical area for the next generation of weaponry and defense technology.

In June of last year, President Trump announced the creation of a [new Space Force](#). It is expected that that agency will take the lead in both development and implementation of the new space-based weapon systems. “We will recognize that space is a new war fighting domain, with the Space Force leading the way,” he declared.



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Trump claimed that the new systems “will terminate any missile launches from hostile powers, or even powers that make a mistake. It won’t happen, regardless of the missile type or geographic origins of the attack. We will ensure that enemy missiles find no sanctuary on Earth or in the skies above.”

At least one Democrat, Senator Edward Markey of Massachusetts, denounced the White House plan for the proposed missile-defense system. “While it is true that the missile threat environment America now faces is different, the answer is not to build a wall in space,” Markey mockingly noted. He then called to mind Ronald Reagan’s “Star Wars” initiative of the 1980s and added that the administration’s “misguided rush to weaponize space would be as ineffective, costly and dangerous as it was more than three decades ago when it was soundly rejected.”

Some GOP politicians are backing Trump on the new space-based system. Senator James Inhofe (R-Okla.) stated, “I am especially encouraged by its emphasis on advanced technology development that will ensure a continued focus on modernization efforts to maintain, and in some cases establish, a competitive advantage relative to our adversaries who are advancing rapidly.”

The obvious fear in all of this is that it may start a whole new arms race. But this arms race has been ongoing for decades with China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran all attempting to develop new weaponry while the United States simply stayed in place. During the Obama years, America simply stopped racing.

The good news is that the systems that the president and the Pentagon are proposing seem to be defensive in nature. Hopefully, this signals an end to the nation-building policies of past administrations of both political parties.

President Trump also took the opportunity to get in a plug for his proposed southern border wall during his speech. “This morning I also would like to briefly address another matter of critical national security — the humanitarian and security crisis at our southern border. Without a strong border America’s defenseless, vulnerable and unprotected,” the president said. “We need strong borders. We need strong barriers and walls.”

Image of a hypersonic missile: [Screenshot of a youtube video by Weapons of the World](#)



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