



PUBLIC DIPLOMACY DIVISION(PDD)
PRESS & MEDIA SECTION
Tel: +32 (0)2 707 5041
E-mail: press@hq.nato.int

Missile Defence Fact Sheet

Missiles pose an increasing threat to Allied populations, territory and deployed forces. Over 30 countries have or are acquiring missiles that could be used to carry not just conventional warheads, but also weapons of mass destruction. The proliferation of these capabilities does not necessarily mean there is an immediate intent to attack NATO, but it does mean that the Alliance has a responsibility to protect its populations.

In early 2010, NATO acquired the first phase of an initial capability to protect Alliance forces against missile threats. At the November 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon, NATO's leaders decided to develop a missile defence capability to pursue its core task of collective defence. To this end they decided that the scope of the current Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence (ALTBMD) programme's command, control and communication capabilities will be expanded beyond the capability to protect forces to also include NATO European populations and territory. In this context, the United States' European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) and other possible national contributions were welcomed as a valuable national contribution to the NATO missile defence architecture.

NATO's work on missile defence started in the early 1990s in response to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, including missiles. Initial focus was on protecting deployed NATO troops (Theatre Missile Defence), but work was expanded in 2002 to include considerations of protection of population centres and territory (Territorial Missile Defence).

- Components of the missile defence policy
- Mechanisms
- Evolution

1. Components of the missile defence policy

The Alliance is conducting three missile defence related activities:

1.1. The Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence System capability

The aim of this capability is to protect NATO-deployed forces against short- and medium-range ballistic missile threats up to 3000-kilometer range. In order to manage the risk associated with development of such a complex capability, ALTBMD will be fielded in several phases.

The completed capability will consist of a multi-layered system of systems, comprising low and high-altitude defences (also called lower- and upper-layer defences), including battle management, communications, command and control (BMC3I), early warning sensors, radars and various interceptors. NATO member countries will provide the sensors and weapon systems, while NATO will develop the BMC3I segment and facilitate the integration of all these elements into a coherent and effective architecture.

In 2005, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) established the NATO Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence Programme Management Organization (ALTBMD PMO) to oversee the ALTBMD Programme. The NATO Consultation, Command and Control Agency (NC3A) and the NATO Air Command and Control System Management Agency (NACMA) are other key NATO bodies involved in the Programme.

The initial activities were focused mainly on system engineering and integration work, and on the development of an Integration Test Bed hosted at the NC3A facilities in The Hague, Netherlands. The Integration Test Bed is essential to validate development work.

In early 2010, the first operational capability, called Interim Capability Step 1 (InCa 1), was fielded. It provides military planners with a planning tool to build the most effective defence design for specific scenarios or real deployments. A more robust version of that capability, called Interim Capability Step 2, was fielded at the end of 2010, and provides shared situational awareness. The complete lower-layer and upper-layer capability will be fielded in the 2018 timeframe.

1.2 Missile Defence for the protection of NATO territory

A Missile Defence Feasibility Study was launched after the November 2002 Prague Summit to examine options for protecting Alliance forces, territory and populations against the full range of missile threats. The study was executed by a transatlantic, multinational industry team, which concluded that missile defence is technically feasible. The results were approved by Allies at the Riga Summit in November 2006, and they have provided a technical basis for ongoing political and military discussions regarding the desirability of a NATO missile defence system.

In this context, at the April 2008 Bucharest Summit, the Alliance also considered the technical details and political and military implications of the proposed elements of the US missile defence system in Europe. Allied leaders recognized that the planned deployment of European-based US missile defence assets would help protect Allies, and agreed that this capability should be an integral part of any future NATO-wide missile defence architecture.

Options for a comprehensive missile defence architecture to extend coverage to all Allied territory and populations not otherwise covered by the US system were developed and reviewed at the Bucharest Summit, and the Allies also encouraged Russia to take advantage of US proposals for cooperation on missile defence. They also stated their readiness to explore the potential for linking US, NATO and Russian missile defence systems at an appropriate time.

At the April 2009 Summit in Strasbourg/Kehl, the Allies tasked several NATO senior bodies to provide political, military, technical and financial advice to inform the missile defence discussion at the next NATO Summit in Lisbon. That work also took into account the US plans to deploy the European Phased Adaptive Approach in NATO-Europe.

At the Lisbon Summit in November 2010, the Allies agreed to acquire a missile defence capability. They agreed that an expanded theatre missile defence programme could form the command, control and communications backbone of such a system. In March 2011, Defence Ministers reviewed progress on the consultation, command and control arrangements encompassing roles and responsibilities of relevant NATO bodies during peacetime, crisis and conflict.

In June 2011, Defence Ministers approved the NATO ballistic missile defence action plan, which provides a comprehensive overview of the key actions and Council decisions required to implement the NATO ballistic missile defence capability over the next decade.

1.3. Missile Defence cooperation with Russia

In 2003, under the auspices of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), a study was launched to assess possible levels of interoperability among the theatre missile defence systems of NATO Allies and Russia.

Together with this study, several computer-assisted exercises have been held to provide the basis for future improvements to interoperability, and to develop mechanisms and procedures for joint operations in the area of theatre missile defence.

NATO and Russia are also examining possible areas for cooperation on territorial missile defence. At the Lisbon Summit, the NRC agreed to discuss pursuing missile defence cooperation. They agreed on a joint ballistic missile threat assessment, and to continue dialogue in this area. The NRC would also resume theatre missile defence cooperation. The NRC was tasked to develop a comprehensive joint analysis of the future framework for missile defence cooperation.

2. Mechanisms

The Defence Policy and Planning Committee (Reinforced) (DPPC(R)) is the senior NATO committee, which oversees and coordinates all efforts to develop the NATO ballistic missile capability at the political-military level, as well as providing political-military guidance and advice on all issues related to NATO Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) policy.

The Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD) is the senior NATO committee which acts as the tasking authority for the theatre missile defence programme. The ALTBMD Programme Management Organization, which comprises a Steering Committee and a Programme Office, directs the programme and reports to the CNAD.

The NRC Missile Defence Working Group is the steering body for NATO-Russia cooperation on missile defence.

3. Evolution

The key policy document providing the framework for NATO's activities in the area of missile defence is NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept.

The Strategic Concept recognizes, inter alia, "The proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, threatens incalculable consequences for global stability and prosperity. During the next decade, proliferation will be most acute in some of the world's most volatile regions". Therefore, NATO will "develop the capability to defend our populations and territories against ballistic missile attack as a core element of our collective defence, which contributes to the indivisible security of our Alliance. We will actively seek cooperation on missile defence with Russia and other Euro-Atlantic partners." As a defensive capability, missile defence will be one element of a broader response to the threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

Key milestones

Theatre Missile Defence

May 2001 NATO launches two parallel feasibility studies for a future Alliance theatre missile defence system.

June 2004 At the Istanbul Summit, Allied leaders direct that work on theatre ballistic missile defence be taken forward expeditiously.

March 2005 The Alliance approves the establishment of a Programme Management Organization under the auspices of the CNAD.

September 2006 The Alliance awards the first major contract for the development of a test bed for the system.

February 2008 The test bed is opened and declared fully operational nine months ahead of schedule.

Throughout 2008 The system design for the NATO command and control component of the theatre missile defence system is verified through testing with national systems and facilities via the integrated test bed; this paves the way for the procurement of the capability.

March 2010 The Interim Capability (InCa) Step 1 is fielded.

June 2010 NATO signs contracts for the second phase of the interim theatre missile defence capability. This will include the capability to conduct a real-time theatre missile defence battle.

At the June 2010 meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence, it was agreed that, should Allies decide at the Lisbon Summit to develop a missile defence capability for NATO which would provide protection to European Allied populations and territory against the increasing threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles, an expanded theatre missile defence programme could form the command, control and communications backbone of such a system. The United States' European Phased Adaptive Approach would provide a valuable national contribution to this capability.

July 2010 InCa 2 passes key tests during the Dutch Air Force Joint Project Optic Windmill 2010 exercise.

December 2010 At the end of 2010, all InCa 2 components – including missile defence sensors and shooters from NATO nations – were linked and successfully tested in an ‘ensemble’ test prior to handover to NATO’s military commanders. InCa 2 was subsequently delivered to the Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) in Uedem, Germany, as an operational capability.

Territorial Missile Defence

November 2002 At the Prague Summit, Allied leaders direct that a Missile Defence Feasibility Study be launched to examine options for protecting Alliance forces, territory and populations against the full range of missile threats.

April 2006 The study concludes that missile defence is technically feasible within the limits and assumptions of the study. The results are approved by NATO’s CNAD.

2007 An update of a 2004 Alliance assessment of missile threat developments is completed.

April 2008 At the Bucharest Summit, Allied leaders agreed that the planned deployment of European-based US missile defence assets should be an integral part of any future NATO-wide missile defence architecture. They called for options for a comprehensive missile defence architecture to extend coverage to all Allied territory not otherwise covered by the US system to be prepared in time for NATO’s next Summit.

December 2008 Options for extending missile defence coverage to all Allied territory not otherwise covered by the US system are delivered to NATO’s Conference for National Armaments Directors, in preparation for the discussions at the next Summit.

April 2009 At the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit, Allies recognized that a future US contribution of important architectural elements could enhance NATO elaboration of the Alliance effort and judged that missile threats should be addressed in a prioritised manner that includes consideration of the level of imminence of the threat and the level of acceptable risk. They also tasked the NAC to present recommendations comprising architecture alternatives, drawing from the architectural elements already studied, for consideration at the next Summit, and to identify and undertake the policy, military and technical work related to a possible expanded role of the ALTBMD programme beyond the protection of NATO deployed forces to include territorial missile defence.

September 2009 The US announced its plan for a European Phased Adaptive Approach.

November 2010 At the Lisbon Summit, the Allies agreed to acquire a territorial missile defence capability. They agreed that an expanded theatre missile defence programme could form the command, control and communications backbone of such a system. The NRC agreed to discuss pursuing missile defence cooperation.

June 2011 NATO Defence Ministers approved the NATO Ballistic Missile Defence Action Plan.

NATO Russia Council Theater Missile Defence Project

- 2003** A study is launched under the NRC to assess possible levels of interoperability among theatre missile defence systems of NATO Allies and Russia.
- March 2004** An NRC theatre missile defence command post exercise is held in the United States.
- March 2005** An NRC theatre missile defence command post exercise is held in the Netherlands.
- October 2006** An NRC theatre missile defence command post exercise is held in Russia.
- January 2008** An NRC theatre missile defence computer assisted exercise takes place in Germany.
- December 2010** First meeting of the NRC Missile Defence Working Group aimed at assessing decisions taken at the Lisbon Summit and exploring possible way forward for cooperation on missile defence.
- June 2011** NRC Defence Ministers take stock of the work on missile defence since the 2010 Lisbon summit.