

# Trump: US will develop space-based missile defense

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Declaring that space is the new warfighting domain, President Donald Trump today vowed the U.S. will develop an unrivaled missile defense system to protect against advanced hypersonic and cruise missile threats from competitors and adversaries.

Trump said in a Pentagon speech that the U.S. will do what it takes “to ensure that we can detect and destroy any missile launched against the United States anywhere, any time, any place.”

Trump did not mention Russia, China or North Korea in his roughly 20-minute speech. But the Pentagon’s new strategy makes clear that its plan for a more aggressive space-based missile defense system is aimed at protecting against existing threats from North Korea and Iran and countering advanced weapon systems being developed by Russia and China.

The new review is the first since 2010, and it concludes that to adequately protect America, the Pentagon must expand defense technologies in space and use those systems to more quickly detect, track and ultimately defeat incoming missiles.

Acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan, who also spoke, said competitors such as Russia and China are aggressively pursuing new missiles that are harder to see, harder to track and



An Aegis missile is tested in December at the Pacific Rim Missile Range Facility on the island of Kauai in Hawaii.

Mark Wright/Missile Defense Agency

harder to defeat.

Specifically, the U.S. is looking at putting a layer of sensors in space to more quickly detect enemy missiles when they are launched, according to a senior administration official, who briefed reporters Wednesday. The U.S. sees space as a critical area for advanced, next-generation capabilities to stay ahead of the threats, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to disclose details of the review

before it was released.

The administration also plans to study the idea of basing interceptors in space, so the U.S. can strike incoming enemy missiles during the first minutes of flight when the booster engines are still burning.

Recognizing the potential concerns surrounding any perceived weaponization of space, the strategy pushes for studies. No testing is mandated, and no final decisions have been made.

Congress, which ordered this review, already has directed the Pentagon to push harder on this “boost-phase” approach, but officials want to study the feasibility of the idea and explore ways it could be done.

The new strategy is aimed at better defending the U.S. against potential adversaries, such as Russia and China, who have been developing and fielding a much more expansive range of advanced offensive

missiles that could threaten America and its allies. The threat is not only coming from traditional cruise and ballistic missiles, but also from hypersonic weapons.

For example, Russian President Vladimir Putin unveiled new strategic weapons he claims can’t be intercepted. One is a hypersonic glide vehicle, which could fly 20 times faster than the speed of sound and make sharp maneuvers to avoid being detected by missile defense systems.

“Developments in hypersonic propulsion will revolutionize warfare by providing the ability to strike targets more quickly, at greater distances, and with greater firepower,” Lt. Gen. Robert Ashley, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told Congress last year. “China is also developing increasingly sophisticated ballistic missile warheads and hypersonic glide vehicles in an attempt to counter ballistic missile defense systems.”

Current U.S. missile defense weapons are based on land and aboard ships. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence have both emphasized space-based capabilities as the next step of missile defense.

Senior administration officials earlier signaled their interest in developing and deploying more effective means of detecting and tracking missiles with a constellation of satellites in space that can, for example, use advanced sensors to follow the full path of a hostile missile so that an anti-missile weapon can be directed into its flight path.

Any expansion of the scope and cost of missile defenses would compete with other defense priorities, including the billions of extra dollars the Trump administration has committed to spending on a new generation of nuclear weapons.

An expansion also would have important implications for American diplomacy, given long-standing Russian hostility to even the most rudimentary U.S. missile defenses and China’s worry that longer-range U.S. missile defenses in Asia could undermine Chinese national security.

Asked about the implications for Trump’s efforts to improve relations with Russia and strike better trade relations with China, the administration official said the U.S. defense capabilities are purely defensive and the U.S. has been very upfront with Moscow and Beijing about its missile defense posture.

The release of the strategy was postponed last year for unexplained reasons, though it came as Trump was trying to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons.

While the U.S. continues to pursue peace with North Korea, Pyongyang has made threats of nuclear missile attacks against the U.S. and its allies in the past and has worked to improve its ballistic missile technology. It is still considered a serious threat to America. Iran, meanwhile, has continued to develop more sophisticated ballistic missiles, increasing their numbers and their capabilities.

## WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

### Government may have split up thousands more migrant families

WASHINGTON — Government investigators said today that thousands more migrant children may have been separated from their families than the Trump administration has acknowledged.

A report from the Health and Human Services inspector general’s office found that family separations were occurring before the spring of last year, when the administration announced its “zero tolerance” policy on the southwest border.

The administration has identified a little more than 2,700 children who were separated from their families. That figure was released as part of a court case in which a federal judge ordered the families reunited.

Despite “considerable” effort by the department to locate all the children who were placed in its care after immigration authorities separated them from their families, officials were still finding new cases as long as five months after the judge’s order requiring reunifications, the report said.

### Cohen acknowledges rigging polls for Trump in 2014 and 2015

NEW YORK — President Donald Trump’s estranged former lawyer is acknowledging that he paid a technology company to rig Trump’s standing in two online polls.

Michael Cohen tweeted today that “what I did was at the direction of and for the sole benefit of” Trump.

Technology company owner John Gauger told The Wall Street Journal that Cohen promised him \$50,000 for work including using computers to enter fake votes for Trump in a 2014 CNBC poll asking people to identify top business leaders and a 2015 poll of potential presidential candidates. Gauger says Cohen paid him about a quarter of the money in cash, then stiffed him on the rest.

The Trump Organization later paid a \$50,000 reimbursement to Cohen. It didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

### FBI: Man wanted to attack White House with antitank rocket

ATLANTA — A Georgia man who traded his car for an antitank rocket, guns and explosives in a plot to storm the White House is under arrest, authorities said.

Hasher Jallal Taheb, 21, of Cumming, was arrested in an FBI sting operation Wednesday and is charged with attempting to damage or destroy a building owned by the United States using fire or an explosive.

The FBI set up the sting after a local law enforcement agency said in March that it got a tip from someone who said Taheb had become radicalized, changed his name and planned to travel abroad. A confidential FBI source and an undercover agent both made contact with Taheb after he advertised his vehicle for sale in August.

The FBI believes Taheb was acting on his own. He met with the undercover agent and the FBI source multiple times last month and was also in frequent contact using an encrypted messaging application.

### Microsoft pledges \$500 million to tackle Seattle housing crisis

SEATTLE — Microsoft pledged \$500 million to address homelessness and develop affordable housing in response to the Seattle region’s widening affordability gap.

Most of the money will be aimed at increasing housing options in the Puget Sound region for low- and middle-income workers at a time when they’re being priced out of Seattle and some of its suburbs, and when the vast majority of new buildings target wealthier renters, said Microsoft President Brad Smith.

The pledge is the largest in the company’s 44-year history, and, according to the company, is one of the heaviest contributions by a private corporation to housing. The Seattle Times reported. In comparison, the amount dwarfs the \$100 million in annual funding for Washington state’s Housing Trust Fund.

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