

# Opinion

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## OUR VIEW

# Planning for the next pandemic

The next global pandemic will be a lot better than this one. Oregon and the world will be more prepared. Right?

Maybe. But panic, scramble and then relax is the more typical pattern of response to a threat. Oregon should do better. The world is not going to get less crowded or less connected.

Can the state get better at contact tracing and quarantining? Will local governments stage mock pandemic exercises? Will hospitals keep stocks of PPE? We can't allow ourselves to get sick of all the focus on sickness.

With the virus raging, now may not be the best time to distract health policy experts and politicians with pandemic preparedness. At the national level, Congress needs to pass another relief package. The Oregon Legislature should do something about renters who may be evicted when the moratorium expires — among other things. But there are a couple longer-term things on our mind.

Authority is one. Gov. Kate Brown's executive orders have faced repeated legal challenges. A most recent one came from the Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association. ORLA sought an injunction that would have ended Brown's two-week freeze. ORLA argued other similar businesses did not face as extensive regulations. A federal judge rejected it.

Earlier this year there were also questions raised about the restrictions on places of worship in Oregon. A U.S. Supreme Court decision on Wednesday night blocked the state of New York from enforcing attendance limits at places of worship while the issue continues to be argued in court. The court said New York's limits did not appear to be applied equally and singled "out houses of worship for especially harsh treatment."

Mask mandates and other restrictions are sensible responses to prevent a deadly virus from spreading. There are boundaries to freedom. When your actions could endanger others is the fuzzy line where freedom ends. It doesn't mean everything Brown does is OK. Executive orders that don't have a foundation in science should be fought and scrapped. But it's not unreasonable for Brown to compel people to try to minimize risk to other people.

But what role should the Legislature have in making decisions about such sweeping regulation of freedom and the economy. Now its role is near zero. Is it right that Brown should be able to revise and extend emergency orders for month after month? At what point should a governor be required under the law to get Legislative approval? Can the Legislature be nimble enough and functional enough to play more of a role? That issue certainly seems worth revisiting.

We were also disturbed by a law passed during the pandemic about government meetings. The law makes it clear that virtual public meetings are allowed. Smart move. But at least according to our understanding, there is no requirement that such meetings be broadcast live nor how much time can be allowed to pass before a recording of a meeting is presented to the public. Some government bodies also have not been allowing the public to comment during their meetings with anywhere near the same welcoming attitude of the pre-COVID world.

Those changes are a threat to the idea that the public should be able to observe government decision-making and public participation. Will they be allowed to become permanent?

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended that there be a national campaign to commemorate the 1918 flu pandemic. It was a way to remind people of the dangers of viral pandemics — deaths, the disruption of lives and the economy. People won't need that sort of messaging now. But will government take action to ensure we are better prepared?

*Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the Baker City Herald. Columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Baker City Herald.*



## Your views

### Premature references to 'president-elect' Biden

Excuse me, but I question whether former Vice President Joe Biden should be addressed as "president-elect" before the electoral college has voted?

If it is parroted enough times, does that make it true?

If people would be willing to venture off of the beaten path of the mainstream media, they would begin to hear of ample evidence of voter fraud that is being corroborated on many

levels and in many jurisdictions.

May I suggest afr.net (phone app or 90.7 FM radio) or OneNewsNow.com?

If Biden won, so be it. But if he didn't, let's not pretend he did.

**Mary Andersen**  
Baker City

# Good news on missile defense

By **Patty-Jane Geller**

You wouldn't know it from the lack of headlines, but the U.S. Navy and Missile Defense Agency recently made history with something that should help make all Americans safer.

Specifically, they successfully shot down an intercontinental-range ballistic missile using the Navy's Standard Missile SM-3 Block IIA interceptor launched from a Navy destroyer.

Missile defense is nothing new, of course. The U.S. has had one for years. But until now, we've tested its ability to defend the homeland from incoming missile attacks only with the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system.

This system consists of 44 ground-based interceptors deployed in Alaska and California, poised to intercept incoming missiles in their midcourse phase as they fly through space before reentering the atmosphere.

These interceptors are a crucial component of U.S. policy to defend the homeland from rogue threats such as North Korea and Iran, both of which have been working to improve their nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, former commander of U.S. Northern Command, certified to the U.S. Senate earlier this year that the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system can defend against the North Korean threat today — but the future is less certain. Two main factors drive this uncertainty.

First, the North Korean threat is visibly advancing, as Pyongyang's display of its new "monster" ICBM in a parade last month demonstrates. It's only a matter of time before its force will become large enough to overwhelm our fleet of 44 interceptors.

Second, the fate of the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system is uncertain. The Pentagon is pursuing the Next

Generation Interceptor program to both increase the capacity of our missile defense system to 64 interceptors and eventually replace our current interceptors, which are old.

The Missile Defense Agency aims to begin fielding the Next Generation Interceptor by 2028, but it would be naive to assume such an acquisition program would be free from risk of delay.

Enter the SM-3 Block IIA interceptor. This year, the Pentagon proposed developing a homeland defense "underlay" — a second layer of interceptors that can take a shot at incoming missiles if our Ground-based Midcourse Defense system's interceptors miss. The SM-3 Block IIA interceptor can launch from Navy destroyers or from Aegis Ashore missile defense systems, and is originally designed to intercept theater-range missiles.

The Missile Defense Agency and Navy accomplished a remarkable feat with this intercept, marking the first use of a theater-range, ship-launched interceptor to shoot down a long-range missile. If SM-3 Block IIA interceptors can defend against ICBMs, then the United States could deploy them as a hedge against impending uncertainty in homeland defense.

The Missile Defense Agency can now proceed with a more complex test, potentially against an ICBM target armed with decoys or other missile-defense countermeasures.

The next administration will then have to decide how to employ the SM-3 interceptor to defend the homeland. Its use can be as simple as maintaining the ability to deploy Aegis ships armed with these interceptors to the Pacific in the event of brewing North Korean aggression.

Besides providing an extra defense against a North Korean attack, the

presence of these ships can boost deterrence. By lowering the probability that an attack will succeed, missile defense complicates an adversary's attack calculus, forcing countries like North Korea to think twice before pushing the nuclear button.

The next administration could also pursue a series of Aegis Ashore deployments across the United States to establish a permanent SM-3 Block IIA intercept capability. This longer-term option would require more resources and a concerted effort from the Pentagon to figure out how many Aegis Ashore systems would need to be built, and where.

This test already provoked blowback from the Russians and Chinese. They claim advancing U.S. missile defenses will threaten strategic stability by encouraging the United States to launch a first strike without fear of assured retaliation. Such accusations must be dismissed as folly.

Despite these charges, an underlay of SM-3 interceptors simply cannot defend against Russia's and China's advanced arsenals, whose sizes alone can overwhelm U.S. homeland defense. Especially as Russia and China hypocritically advance missile interceptors of their own, the United States must not let Russia and China weigh in on our pursuit of an underlay to defend against North Korea.

As preparations take place for the next administration and a new Congress, homeland missile defense must remain a top priority. With the success of this test, pursuing the SM-3 Block IIA interceptor as an additional means of homeland defense is now a potential path toward a stronger homeland defense.

*Patty-Jane Geller is a policy analyst for nuclear deterrence and missile defense in The Heritage Foundation's Center for National Defense.*

## OTHER VIEWS

# Going too far to promote diversity

**Editorial from Pittsburgh Post-Gazette:**

Many of America's art institutions are working toward diversity, but how far is too far in pursuit of that ideal?

With mere hours to spare, the Baltimore Museum of Art canceled plans to auction three pieces constituting the core of its contemporary collection, including a silk screen by Andy Warhol, "The Last Supper."

Proceeds from the sale were to fund the purchase of art by women and artists of color and shore up endowments for staff salaries and free admission.

This is too far.

In the run-up to the aborted sale, numerous stakeholders and museum professionals decried the auction as a breach of public trust and called on the Maryland

attorney general to halt the transaction. Museum donors rescinded a reported \$50 million in planned giving. Three honorary board members quit, though more than 95% of trustees initially approved the sale.

When withdrawing from the auction, museum leaders said they remain committed to their goals of increasing diversity and combating the institution's history of systemic racism.

Fine objectives. But there are ways other than cutting the collection. The museum is capable of fundraising to support the same initiatives.

To jump straight to sacrificing the great for the sake of the diverse was a mistake.

The initial decision to auction the paintings comes during a time of loosened restrictions. In the spring the

American Alliance of Museums relaxed rules surrounding "deaccession," or the formal process of removing a work from a collection. This would allow cash-strapped institutions to sell works to keep the lights on and to continue paying salaries.

The Baltimore Museum of Art was in no such position.

Deaccession is a common enough process that happens during the typical curatorial process at every museum. However, it's more common to see second-tier work on the chopping block as opposed to blue-chip works like the Warhol painting, a Brice Marden and a Clyfford Still.

The museum's 11th-hour decision to cancel the sale was the right one. Building a better, more inclusive future for museums does not need to come at the expense of the top tier of its current collection.