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## **Battle-ready missile defense radars must be protected from cuts<sup>1</sup>**

By Michael Barrett, former director of strategy, White House Homeland Security Council

Washington's inability to tackle the ballooning federal budget deficit is widely recognized as harmful to our fiscal health. But now, it is poised to begin imperiling U.S. national security and our position as the world's foremost military power. The 2011 Budget Control Act mandated reductions to the Defense Department's future expenditures, cutting approximately \$487 billion in military spending over the next ten years -- almost doubling the already agreed to defense cuts.

In a better world, such significant cuts would have compelled lawmakers and Defense officials to carefully assess military spending in light of our needs and commitments abroad and to line up our strategy with our resources. Instead, it now looks as if several of our nation's defense programs will instead be subject to thoughtless, across-the-board cuts, regardless of their performance.

The proposed cuts to our missile defense systems are especially worrisome, because global access to missile technology - including warheads armed with nuclear, biological or chemical weapons - has been steadily on the rise over the past decade.

Indeed, the threat of a rogue state like North Korea or Iran employing an advanced missile system is mounting day by day, and already, an estimated

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<sup>1</sup> <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/economy-a-budget/264305-battle-ready-missile-defense-radars-must-be-protected-from-cuts>

6,000 ballistic missiles are outside the control of the United States, China, Russia, and NATO. Yet beltway bureaucrats now plan to gut the acquisition of a radar system essential for ballistic missile defense.

The Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance and Control system, or AN/TPY-2, is the world's most advanced mobile radar. Its high-resolution radar is capable of precisely tracking all classes of ballistic missiles and accurately identifying very small objects at great distance. AN/TPY-2 is particularly powerful because it can also classify threats, discriminating between an actual warhead and a mere decoy, as well as all the debris that accompanies a ballistic missile being fired.

The radar already plays a vital role in America's Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS). In one of its modes, the AN/TPY-2 serves as the "eyes" of missile defense, providing a vital warning and cueing function shortly after an enemy ballistic missile is launched -- and then passing precise information about the threat to Command and Control systems. It can also serve as a fire control radar that communicates with interceptor missiles to detect, track, and destroy any threatening missiles.

Perhaps most importantly, in a contest where early detection is essential to successful intercept, the AN/TPY-2 can detect some missiles just seconds into flight -- and some six or seven minutes earlier than the missile defense systems of many other countries.

Furthermore, reliable performance over great distances is critical as ballistic missiles become more sophisticated and powerful. Our adversaries are investing heavily in capabilities to strike us at arm's length. Since 2005, the AN/TPY-2 has performed successfully in more than 50 test missions, as well as in thousands of satellite tracking exercises.

Our missile defense technology has substantially improved our chances of intercepting an attack. In even a short-lived conflict that could easily amount to many thousands of lives saved, both military and civilian, while also limiting the need for mass evacuations from forward-deployed bases and strategic assets or even cities near a conflict zone.

So far, eight U.S. AN/TPY-2 radars have been produced and another three are in the works. The Missile Defense Agency intended to acquire seven additional systems, as the radar is in strong demand by the nation's combatant commanders and could be useful against multiple potential theaters of conflict. But budget cuts have cancelled these plans. A move by the

Senate Appropriations Committee for Defense earlier this year should save one of those seven - but we'll still be far short of what our nation needs.

Some in the Pentagon rationalize these cuts by pointing to early research into an array of new, high-end missile defense sensors. New research is important, especially as the threat continues to change - but given that the replacement program might not be completed until well after 2020 it doesn't make sense to just abandon proven systems that meet today's threats.

Indeed, the AN/TPY-2 is just entering the prime of its useful service life and we're just beginning to leverage its many capabilities. In fact, the independent National Research Council recently determining that "stacking" two AN/TPY-2s on top of one another can provide enhanced capability at significant savings compared to a potential replacement program.

If further defense cuts do take place over the next 10 years, the United States may be left with its smallest ground force since World War Two; the smallest Navy since 1915; and the smallest Air Force fighter inventory in history.

While some programmatic cuts are inevitable, we should nonetheless avoid leaving our country and our allies essentially blind to a missile attack for up to a decade. While the probability and severity of sustained missile combat are increasing, we have an extremely powerful and operationally-proven radar system at the ready. We should look elsewhere to find the cuts, for given our adversaries' capabilities, opening ourselves up to missile attacks is strategically unsound.

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