

In major expansion of US nuclear buildup, Trump orders construction of nationwide missile defense system

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On Monday, President Donald Trump ordered the construction of a new missile defense system covering the United States, the latest move in a years-long drive spanning multiple administrations to massively expand US nuclear capabilities.

Speaking later on Monday, Trump said he would “immediately begin the construction of a state-of-the-art Iron Dome missile defense shield.”

Trump added, “We’re going to ensure that we have the most lethal fighting force in the world.”

The executive order “directs implementation of a next-generation missile defense shield for the United States against ballistic, hypersonic, advanced cruise missile, and other next-generation aerial attacks.”

Despite the terminology, nuclear missile defense systems are inherently offensive, not defensive in character. The purpose is to facilitate nuclear first strikes by allowing the country building the shield to carry out a nuclear attack on another nuclear-armed nation, then shoot down the nuclear missiles that are sent in response to the attack.

The announcement comes amid the stated threats by Trump—in addition to continuing the US/NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and escalating the military buildup against China—to seize the Panama Canal and Greenland, a territory of NATO member Denmark, through military force. Trump has also threatened to wage war against Mexico and turn Canada into an American state, transforming North America into a battlefield.

The executive order signed by Trump is titled “The Iron Dome for America,” referencing the Israeli Iron Dome missile defense system, which has enabled Israel to attack most of its neighbors—including Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Iran—over the past year, while suffering only limited damage from counterattacks.

The United States is 40 times larger than Israel, and any missile defense system covering the whole of the United States would cost, at minimum, hundreds of billions of

dollars—a figure fully in keeping with the multi-trillion-dollar nuclear modernization program that has been underway for years.

Commenting on the scale of the plan, *The Wall Street Journal* wrote approvingly:

None of this will be cheap, and Mr. Trump will have to seek much more than the \$10 billion or so a year that the US now spends on missile defense. He’ll also need champions in the Pentagon and Congress to push it through a bureaucracy that would prefer to spend on other things.

The implication, as the *Journal* indicates, is that the allocation of resources for this military buildup will entail massive cuts to domestic social spending.

The order instructs Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth to submit to the White House within 60 days a “reference architecture, capabilities-based requirements, and an implementation plan for the next-generation missile defense shield.”

It envisions a program for the “Defense of the United States against ballistic, hypersonic, advanced cruise missiles, and other next-generation aerial attacks from peer, near-peer, and rogue adversaries.”

The program would be vast in scale, deploying a new array of sensors for tracking missiles as well as the “development and deployment of proliferated space-based interceptors.”

Trump’s threats to use the American military to carry out his annexationist foreign policy has triggered alarms in Europe. Robert Brieger, chairman of the European Union Military Committee, the bloc’s highest military body, told the German newspaper *Die Welt* that the EU should deploy military forces to Greenland. “That would send a strong

signal,” Brieger said.

Meanwhile, Denmark has announced the allocation of over one billion euros to expand its defenses in the Arctic region, including Greenland. “We must face the fact that there are serious challenges regarding security and defense in the Arctic and North Atlantic,” said Troels Lund Poulsen, the country’s defense minister, on Monday.

Trump’s missile defense program is only the latest move in a massive expansion of US nuclear forces, initiated under the Obama administration, in what US military planners call the “second nuclear age.”

Last October, the *New York Times* published a feature story, based on over 100 interviews, analyzing a secret plan dedicated to “making America nuclear again” through the creation of a “modern arsenal for a volatile new nuclear age.”

“If you don’t live where the submarines are welded or the missile silos are dug, there’s a good chance you wouldn’t know it’s happening,” the *Times* wrote. “The federal government has said little about the plan in public, outside of congressional hearings and strategy papers, or the vast amount being spent. There has been no significant debate. The billion-dollar programs move under the radar.”

The plan for the “second nuclear age” transcends administrations. The semi-secret nuclear modernization plan, first conceptualized in 2010 under Obama and initiated at scale in 2014, continued and accelerated under Trump and Biden, and is to be further escalated in the second Trump administration.

Against the backdrop of Trump’s proposal to build a new missile defense system for the United States, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, founded in 1945 by Albert Einstein, J. Robert Oppenheimer and University of Chicago scientists who helped develop the first atomic weapons, warned that the world’s risk of nuclear destruction is the greatest it has ever been.

The *Bulletin* wrote that “in 2024, humanity edged ever closer to catastrophe... Consequently, we now move the Doomsday Clock from 90 seconds to 89 seconds to midnight—the closest it has ever been to catastrophe.”

The organization warned:

The countries that possess nuclear weapons are increasing the size and role of their arsenals, investing hundreds of billions of dollars in weapons that can destroy civilization. The nuclear arms control process is collapsing, and high-level contacts among nuclear powers are totally inadequate given the danger at hand. Alarming, it is no longer unusual for countries without nuclear weapons to

consider developing arsenals of their own—actions that would undermine longstanding nonproliferation efforts and increase the ways in which nuclear war could start.

Manpreet Sethi, PhD, speaking for the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, warned that the US “seems inclined to expand its nuclear arsenal and adopt a posture that reinforces the belief that ‘limited’ use of nuclear weapons can be managed. Such misplaced confidence could have us stumble into a nuclear war.”

In a detailed annual review of the US’s nuclear forces, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* warned that “The United States has embarked on a wide-ranging nuclear modernization program that will ultimately see every nuclear delivery system replaced with newer versions over the coming decades.”

It concluded:

Based on the Congressional Budget Office’s 2017 estimate, the effort will cost \$1.2 trillion (Congressional Budget Office 2017). Notably, although the estimate accounts for inflation, other estimates forecast that the total cost will be closer to \$1.7 trillion (Arms Control Association 2017). Whatever the actual price tag will be, historical trends and chronic delays to the modernization program indicate that it is likely to increase over time.

The massive buildup of the nuclear arsenal over the past decade has now been put in the hands of Trump, whose targets for nuclear coercion include not only the former Soviet Union, China and the former colonial world, but also Washington’s imperialist rivals, against whom he has threatened to use the American military.



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