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TO: Interested Parties

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RE: Obama's Missile Defense Program: Talking Points

Background

On September 17, President Obama announced a new plan for U.S. national missile defenses to protect the United States, our NATO allies and Israel from a growing Iranian threat. The President scrapped the Bush administration's proposed system of ten interceptor missile silos and a missile defense radar system in the Czech Republic that would not be operational until 2017. Instead, the United States will deploy a system that begins to provide protection by 2011 and is able to respond to real, present threats: the short- and medium-range missiles that Iran already has.

We believe that the President's action to change course was both tough and smart. Nevertheless, conservatives have responded to the announcement in a predictable manner. Missile defense has always been more of an ideological point of faith for the right, rather than a reasoned response to real threats. As such, comments from leading conservatives have been totally out of touch: Senator Jon Kyl claimed the decision left the United States more vulnerable to Iranian missiles and labeled the administration's action "dangerous and short-sighted."¹ Others have declared that the President is abandoning Israel and US allies in Eastern Europe.

This memo provides talking points about the President's decision and responses to right-wing attacks.

Talking Points

- The President's decision is a tough and smart approach to the real threat facing the US and our allies—hundreds of short and medium-range missiles that Iran already possesses. It will provide missile defense at least 6 years earlier than the Bush plan by using proven technology on-board U.S. Navy missile ships in the Black Sea.
- The Bush plan was designed to defend against an Iranian intercontinental ballistic missile—a weapon that does not exist – using defensive technology that does not work.

- The Obama plan does not “scrap” missile defense. The President’s budget includes \$9.3 billion in missile defense spending for 2010 (85% of the 2009 funding).
- Defense Secretary Robert Gates and the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff unanimously support President Obama’s decision.
- This decision improves the security of US allies in Eastern Europe by deploying real technology right away. Also, in response to the President’s decision, the Russians announced they will not deploy short range missiles that could reach Poland or the Czech Republic.²

Conclusion

President Obama’s new missile defense policy will strengthen our security. He is now deploying systems that can defeat the real threats that confront us, while continuing research funding to develop a system that can defeat a future Iranian or North Korean ICBM, which will not exist for a number of years.

Endnotes

¹ Press Statement, Office of Senator Jon Kyl, September 17, 2009.

² Vladimir Isachenkov, “Russia says it won’t deploy missiles near Poland”, *Associated Press*, September 19, 2009