



## Missile Defense Briefing Report: No. 340

September 28, 2015

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### EXPLORING EAST COAST SITE OPTIONS

By 2017, the U.S. Department of Defense is expected to make a final decision regarding the location of a new site that will guard against intercontinental ballistic missiles. This system, called the Ground Based Interceptor Ballistic Missile Defense Mission, is being designed with the goal of protecting the eastern United States and serve as a complement to two missile defense sites already in operation in Alaska and California.

The Pentagon has selected four potential bases for the new system, but lawmakers say Fort Custer, Michigan is "in a very strong position" in the selection process, for a number of reasons. In addition to already boasting a 10,000 ft. runway, the site is energy secure because of its exploitation of both wind and solar power - making it less susceptible to problems with the electric grid. The selection process, however, still hinges on a major hurdle. Congress has yet to actually approve funding for a third site. (mlive, September 3, 2015)

### GROWING PAINS FOR MIDEAST MISSILE SHIELD

For years, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has been seeking to implement a region-wide missile defense system - a goal that has received strong support from the United States. Such a coordinated effort is arguably even more critical now, given that the recent nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 failed to encompass Iran's offensive missile capabilities. Yet major disagreements over the prospective shield remain, significant among the deciding which countries will actually staff the resulting missile command and control center. One plan calls for a command facility, operated by Saudi personnel, in Abu Dhabi. But this scheme would require the other GCC states to surrender control of their airspace to the new facility - something which many Gulf States at present are unwilling to do. Other major hurdles preventing an agreement include ensuring the interoperability of the equipment to be deployed, as well as NATO restrictions that limit data sharing and training between countries. (*Defense News*, August 30, 2015)

### CHINESE MISSILE ADVANCES ON DISPLAY

China's recent public military parade, organized to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, was also an opportunity for the country to show off its latest hardware. One system of particular interest to foreign observers was the DF-21D, or "carrier-killer," anti-ship ballistic missile. Based on the external appearance of the missiles, western analysts have concluded that China has indeed made significant technological advances on missile development - and in an area of significant concern to the United States in particular, which relies heavily on its aircraft carriers to tools of American global power projection. (CNN, September 4th, 2015)

### ISRAELI MISSILE DEFENSE AT SEA

With Israeli industry seeking to expand its maritime presence after the recent discovery of offshore natural gas reserves, the country's military has begun to invest in technology capable of defending these new platforms. One such recently-unveiled system is a sea-based analogue to the country's wildly-successful "Iron Dome." Recently demonstrated as part of an Israeli Navy exercise, the new system - dubbed "Iron Dome of the Sea" - is aimed at protecting gas rigs from a variety of anti-ship missiles possessed by Lebanon's Hezbollah militia, as well as Iranian-made drones that could be fielded by the Shi'ite group. (*Defense World*, September 4, 2015)

### THE NEXT ITERATION OF ABL

In 2011, the Missile Defense Agency ended its Airborne Laser program, citing inefficiencies in the development and utilization of the aircraft-based chemical laser. Now, however, advances in laser development have given the technology new legs. The Pentagon's procurement chief, Frank Kendall, recently stated that the Defense Department had learned from the mothballed program and was now looking to incorporate more efficient lasers into evolving drone technology. These drones would ideally fly around 65,000 feet (where lasers are stronger due to a thinner atmosphere) and stay aloft for days at a time, providing affordable and consistent missile defense for the United States and its allies. The technical challenge of reducing the weight of the laser systems is the largest roadblock to the initiative, but the future appears promising. (*Breaking Defense*, August 17, 2015)