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Received: from [207.178.140.2] (helo=207.178.140.2)  
by mail.iswest.com with smtp (Exim 2.00 #2)  
for governor@govoff.state.ms.us  
id 12LZXD-00056f-00; Thu, 17 Feb 2000 14:36:31 -0800  
From: larry\_arnn@claremont.org  
To: governor@govoff.state.ms.us  
Subject: Claremont Institute Precepts: Defending California, Defending America  
Date: Thu, 17 Feb 2000 13:40:46 -0800  
X-Mailer: Allaire ColdFusion Application Server  
Message-Id: <E12LZXD-00056f-00@mail.iswest.com>

The Claremont Institute--PRECEPTS | February  
17, 2000 | No  
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The Claremont Institute and the Heritage Foundation will co-host a conference in Long Beach, California on February 26 called "Defending California, the Nation, and America's Allies from Ballistic Missile Attack." The event will feature leading national security experts discussing the state of our nation's defense, especially the pressing need for a realistic national missile defense.

That same day, the Claremont Institute will unveil a new website devoted to missile defense. It will be an important resource for anyone seeking to understand the nuclear threat to the United States and how a missile defense would actually work.

The conference could not come at a more crucial time.

This summer, President Clinton will likely decide on whether to build a limited missile defense to defend America against a missile attack from North Korea and other violent places that are building missile systems rapidly. The New York Times reports that Pentagon officials are pushing to delay the decision as they are still testing and improving the missile interceptors. In the meantime, the Clinton Administration is talking to Russia about renegotiating the 1972 ABM Treaty (made with the defunct Soviet Union) to allow a limited system.

Such developments should not be confused with progress.

For the past seven years, the Clinton Administration has done little to advance a national missile defense. The necessary research on missile interceptors, space-based lasers, and satellite systems has simply not been done at adequate levels. This despite bi-partisan congressional commissions that confirm nuclear missile proliferation by Russia, Communist China, North Korea, Iran and Iraq.

The proposal under discussion in the White House right now calls for a land-based site, possibly in Alaska, with some 20 to 100 interceptors. The purpose of the site will be to stop a North Korean missile, the Taepo Dong II, from striking the United States. But signing an agreement to limit the United States to mitigating only the North Korean threat makes no sense. The very idea of a limited defense should be unacceptable to Americans and our allies who will

remain vulnerable to nuclear or chemical attack from Russia and China.

Expensive land-based systems, although necessary at some point in the building of a comprehensive national defense, should not be our only option. We must take care not to divert resources from other systems -- such as a sea-based system using our existing fleet of Aegis Cruisers and later the more effective space-based lasers -- that could in fact protect the United States and its allies.

These important issues will be the subject of our discussions in Long Beach on the 26th. I hope you can join us. For more information about the conference agenda or to sign up for the event, I invite you to visit the Claremont Institute's website at <http://www.claremont.org/Events/bmd.cfm>, or go to our home page at <http://www.claremont.org>.

Sincerely,  
Larry P. Arnn  
President, The Claremont Institute

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