

Tough Calls, Good Calls

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One of the most difficult and consequential decisions of the Bush presidency took place in January of last year: the decision to fundamentally change our strategy by "surging" more U.S. forces to Iraq.

This decision was taken against the backdrop of escalating violence in Iraq, calls for immediate or "phased" withdrawal, prognostications of imminent defeat, and an abundance of political blame directed at the White House. The president's move was met with skepticism and outright vilification, except for a few principled politicians like John McCain and Joe Lieberman. Today, people are getting in line to claim credit for the "surge."

Mr. Bush's decision was guided by a clear strategic principle. The president wanted the U.S. to win, and refashioning our strategy was the best opportunity to succeed in this goal, as well as to leave Iraq policy on a sounder basis for his successor. Whoever wins the presidency in 2008 will be pleased that he did. What a difference a year makes.

The most underappreciated foreign policy achievement of the Bush Presidency is missile defense.

The surge may turn out to be Mr. Bush's most important decision. But he has made other such decisions since 9/11, including to commit ground forces to Afghanistan, to eradicate the regime of Saddam Hussein, to use the CIA to conduct strategic interrogation of high-level terrorists, and to conduct strategic surveillance of terrorists communications.

Mr. Bush has faced so many tough choices over the last seven years that his decision to withdraw from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty has been at least partially forgotten. Yet this decision, announced in December 2001, was no less consequential. It also defied the critics who argued that it would lead to a new arms race, increase nuclear proliferation and ruin cooperation with Russia on nuclear arms control and terrorism.

None of these things have happened as a result of the ABM Treaty withdrawal. But the decision will enable us to counter a still-growing 21st century threat.

In the summer of 2006, when Kim Jong Il was again seeking to intimidate America and its allies with medium and long-range missiles, the president had no real options short of pre-emptive attack or retaliation. And yet here, as with the surge, our next president

will have tools at his or her disposal because Mr. Bush did not hesitate to do what was necessary for U.S. security.

Mr. Bush has assigned direction of our missile-defense capabilities and their integration into our overall defense strategy to the United States Strategic Command, part of whose mission is the responsibility for defending the nation from strategic missile attack. A global command and control system is being built, and is already functioning, to network our existing sensors and weapons. This can exercise real forces against current and emerging threats.

Meanwhile, a test bed has been built in the Pacific that includes operational assets—sensors and shooters—from California to Alaska, from the Aleutian Islands to Hawaii. Despite critics' claims to the contrary, test after test of kinetic kill interceptors has demonstrated the effectiveness of our defenses.

The first strategic missile interceptors since 1975 are deployed in Fort Greely, Alaska and Vandenberg AFB, Calif. They stand guard against an attack on the entire country. Sea-based interceptors that have far greater capability than the Patriots of Iraq are being deployed, using the SM-3 missile and Aegis radars.

Cooperation with key allies on missile defense is at an all-time high, and we are finally able to cooperate in ways that protect both American and allied territory. In Japan, we have deployed a radar capable of providing data for protecting both Japanese and U.S. territory. We are also co-developing a new version of the SM-3 that will have greater capability against long-range threats.

None of this could have happened if President Bush had not decided to withdraw from the ABM Treaty. What are the next steps that the country should take to capitalize fully on this strategic choice?

First, the president's call for a third strategic missile defense site in Europe must be carried out. This site provides additional capability to protect the U.S., and to protect as well our European allies from a growing Iranian missile threat. The site would further cement the development of a global sensor-and-interceptor network necessary for effective missile defense. Failure to follow through would have implications for

our alliances both inside and out of Europe.

Second, we can expect that rogue states such as North Korea and Iran are already looking at ways to counter our existing defenses. One way they might do this is to deploy decoys or other countermeasures on their existing offensive missiles that must be attacked, and could thus exhaust our limited supply of interceptors. Fortunately, we can now explore cost-effective solutions to this threat.

One solution is to develop interceptors with multiple kill vehicles—something that was explicitly banned by the ABM Treaty. Another solution is to develop advanced discrimination techniques to tell the decoys from the real threats. These techniques include using radars, space-based sensors, or a

new concept that utilize interceptors sweep away an decoys, allowing t tor to hone in on t

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