North Korea's Wakeup Call

by Phyllis Schlafly

December 26, 2012

It should have been a loud wakeup call in December when North Korea successfully launched a three-stage rocket delivering a payload in orbit around the globe. This event established North Korea's credentials as having intercontinental ballistic missile technology. On December 23, North Korean officials announced that an analysis of the debris from the rocket shows it has the ability to reach the U.S. mainland.

North Korea's test was a surprise to Americans, to the Obama Administration and to Congress because its last couple of tests had been failures. More alarming was the fact that the launch was a surprise to our intelligence community, which didn't know the North Koreans had perfected this technology, and didn't anticipate a launch.

There should have been an immediate demand that the Obama Administration fulfill its constitutional duty to 'provide for the common defense.' What could be a more important duty, and a more pressing need for spending our tax dollars, than to save Americans from being incinerated by nuclear bombs?

Ballistic missiles combined with nuclear or chemical weapons are the way an evil enemy country without an airforce or military can project power outside of its borders and threaten the United States. Rockets and missiles are the weapons of choice for terrorists and rogue groups to project power and threaten us.

An unprecedented number of countries have now acquired or are trying to acquire ballistic missiles armed with warheads of mass destruction. North Korea has more than two nuclear weapons and over a thousand ballistic missiles, and Iran has over a thousand ballistic missiles and is working as fast as it can to get nuclear weapons.

Homeland defense should not mean merely tidying up after a hurricane or tornado, housing a few thousand people in makeshift tents, and setting up food kitchens. North Korea's successful missile launch dramatizes the fact that homeland defense demands that our government do something we cannot do for ourselves: have a functioning system that will shoot down enemy missiles before they kill Americans.

An operational U.S. anti-missile defense system is not only vital to save lives, but it's the best deterrent to war and attack. We now know that Ronald Reagan won the Cold War at Reykjavik without firing a shot (as Margaret Thatcher famously said) when Reagan refused to abandon or trade away his plans for anti-missile defense.

The Nixon-Ford-Kissinger strategy for holding the giant Soviet missile threat at bay was MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction), *i.e.*, our threat to retaliate and wipe Russia off the map. But MAD would be no deterrent to the terrorists because they are all too eager to commit suicide.

When President Reagan announced his plan to build an anti-missile defense, the Left went on the attack, calling it Star Wars and denying that it was possible to knock out an incoming missile in space, a feat often described as hitting bullet with bullet. Nobody any longer argues that an anti-missile defense doesn't work, and the United States has had over 50 successes in its missile defense testing.

Israel proved the effectiveness and efficiency of anti-missile defense with its Iron Dome system, which by November 2012 had intercepted more than 400 rockets aimed at Israel's population. Israel's system is designed to intercept and destroy short-range rockets and artillery shells fired from distances up to 70 kilometers, and it accomplished its assigned task.

The United States has some missile defense interceptors in place but almost none to protect the eastern seaboard of our country. The United States needs to be equally protected and defended, from Alaska and Hawaii to our East Coast.

The United States spends about $700 billion annually on national defense, of which only one percent is spent on missile defense development and acquisition. We should strive for two percent of our defense budget in order to give anti-missile defense the priority and resources we so urgently need and to start a realistic modernization program.

The American people must be educated about the fact that a single nuclear weapon exploded a hundred miles above the United States could create electromagnetic pulse effects, thereby bringing our entire economy to a standstill. We could lose for many months all our electric power, our communications, transportation, banking and other critical infrastructure systems.

That would be like a return to the 18th century. But we no longer have the agrarian society that supported Americans in those olden days because we now import the majority of our food.

Because of the growing missile threat from hostile states and terrorists, the first duty of our government is to make deployment of a multi-layered missile defense system to protect the entire United States our urgent national priority.