

NATO and missile defence

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Experts with a vested interest in both "worst casing" the missile threat and in spinning evaluations of missile defence capabilities continue to dictate [defence policy](#). The latest proposal under consideration within [Nato](#) is to integrate the [active layered theatre ballistic missile defence](#) (ALTBMD) system with the so-called [phased adaptive approach](#) (the latest reincarnation of US ballistic missile defence for Europe).

[Nato](#) secretary general [Anders Fogh Rasmussen](#), his expert group and President Obama have already strongly backed the proposal, which is up for final approval at the Nato summit in Lisbon in November. Without providing any supporting evidence (all Nato feasibility studies remain classified), Rasmussen claims that this new approach would cost alliance members less than ≈ 200 m over 10 years.

However, the US has spent over \$100bn since the mid-1980s, with only a limited working infrastructure to show for it. And according to insiders, the ALTBMMD system is three years behind schedule and barely a working prototype, while two US experts claim that the interceptors do not reliably and consistently hit incoming warheads. Is it really rocket science to expect the Cabinet Office and parliament to investigate the true capabilities of ballistic missile defence systems in advance of their procurement? But as history has shown, big military programmes are rarely cancelled once governments and the contractors are on board

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