Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 29, 2006

Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld,

We are writing to inquire about your comments Sunday at Fort Greeley, Alaska that you would like to see a full test of the U.S. missile defense capability. You stated that you wanted to have a test "where we actually put all the pieces together; that just hasn't happened." We could not agree with you more regarding the need to perform a full end-to-end test of the existing limited missile defense system in operationally realistic conditions.

As you know, in the 10 previous tests of interceptors based in California and Alaska, only 5 have successfully intercepted a target. The Ground-Based Midcourse Defense system was last tested in December 2005 without a live target. In December 2004 and February 2005, the interceptor rocket failed to lift off the launch pad. Tests have been highly scripted with unrealistic countermeasures; the time of the enemy launch was known; and the threat only came from a single enemy missile. The next test, planned for this week will not actually seek to defeat an incoming target but simply to determine if the kill-vehicle can recognize an incoming warhead.

On July 4th, North Korea test fired seven missiles including its long range Taepodong 2 missile for the first time. While the latter failed within a minute of launch and the missile's range is unknown, it marked North Korea's break with a unilateral moratorium it has observed since 1999. Documents supporting the Missile Defense Agency's fiscal year 2007 budget request, observe that "Without major technical hurdles, an adversary could choose to launch a missile at the United States from a forward-based sea platform within a few hundred kilometers of U.S. territory."

We support your call for an operationally realistic test of our current missile defense system to know the actual state of our capabilities. Since the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was launched in the mid 1980s, the United States has spent nearly $100 billion on missile defense programs and studies with little to show for it. You have asked the American people to pay for over $10 billion in missile funding in the 2007 fiscal year.

Unfortunately, after reviewing the Missile Defense Agency's test schedule, we see no evidence of the comprehensive and realistic end-to-end test of the limited missile defense

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system that you called for at Fort Greeley. When is such a test planned? As supporters of fielding a limited missile defense capability that works, we would also like to know when you believe that the American people can be sure that this limited system will truly defend our country against a threat such as North Korea.

We look forward to your timely response,

Sincerely,

Ellen O. Tauscher

Joe Sestak

Neil Abercrombie

Jim Cooper

Mark Udall

John Spratt

Loretta Sanchez