

## U.S. to test missile shield vs. Iran-style strike

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States will test its core missile defenses for the first time in January against a simulated long-range Iranian attack, a top Pentagon official said on Monday, amid tensions with Tehran.

Speaking at the Reuters Aerospace and Defense Summit in Washington, Army Lieutenant General Patrick O'Reilly, the head of the Missile Defense Agency, said the roughly \$150 million test was a departure from the more standard scenario of a North Korean attack.

It also would be more difficult testing the U.S. Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system against a missile that would be faster and more direct as it races toward the United States than a simulated strike from North Korea.

"Previously, we have been testing the GMD system against a North Korean-type scenario," O'Reilly said.

"This next test ... is more of a head-on shot like you would use defending against an Iranian shot into the United States. So that's the first time that we're now testing in a different scenario."

His comments came the same day that diplomats disclosed concerns among intelligence agencies that Iran tested a key atomic bomb component as recently as 2007. The finding, if proven true, would clash with Iran's assertion that its nuclear work is for civilian use.

The test would fire an interceptor missile from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California at a simulated incoming missile, launched from the Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean. An aide to O'Reilly estimated the cost at about \$150 million.

Experts compare the simulation to a bullet hitting another bullet in space. O'Reilly said the goal was to destroy the target over the north central Pacific when the missiles had a combined closing speed of more than 17,000 miles per hour.

"Whenever we have a situation where we're taking on a missile more head on than from the side, that increases the challenges," O'Reilly said.

RUSSIA, JAPAN

U.S. President Barack Obama revamped the U.S. missile defense strategy for Europe in September to focus more on Iranian short- and medium-range missiles.

"The development of that (Iranian) long-range threat has been slower than what was originally estimated, and the pace of the medium-range missiles is dramatically higher," he said.

Obama's revamp may clear the way for collaboration with Russia, which had fiercely opposed a Bush-era plan to put ground-based interceptors in Poland and a related radar system in the Czech Republic.

O'Reilly said Washington and Moscow were in regular contact to exchange ideas on possible collaboration.

"We've proposed a large number of ideas, starting with sharing data from their sensors and our sensors, moving all the way to cooperative development, cooperative testing and so forth," he said.

"So they have expressed an interest, and shown it through subsequent technical working group meetings."

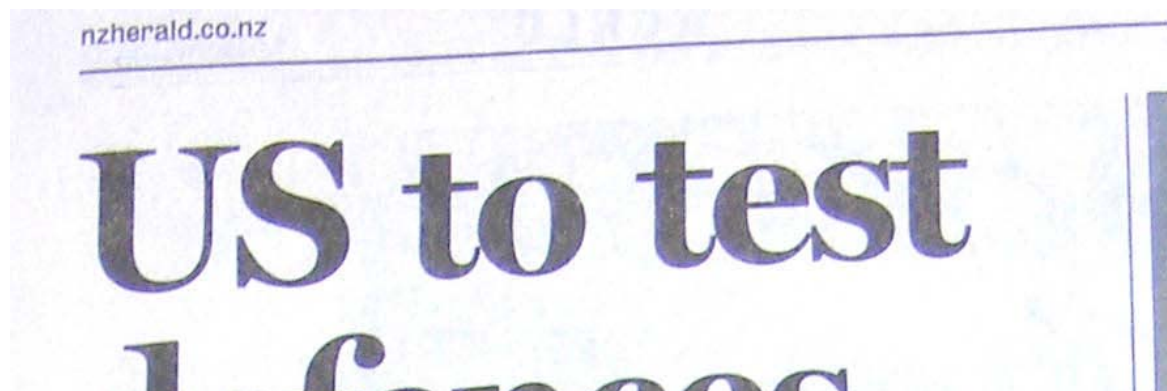
Turning to Japan, O'Reilly said that the new Japanese government had reaffirmed its commitment, in talks with him last month in Tokyo, to develop the next generation of SM-3 interceptors.

Boeing Co is the prime contractor for the GMD and Raytheon is the prime contractor for the SM-3.

"I just recently returned from a joint review with the Japanese. We are committed to that program and they have expressed that they remained committed," he said.

He said the new SM-3 missile would be about twice the weight and twice the range of the previous generation.

"And there are obviously opportunities for follow-on. But right now we agreed we are focused on the development to ensure that is successful first," he said.



# defences for mock Iran strike

**UNITED STATES:** Tehran to put American trio on trial as nuclear tensions mount

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**IN CUSTODY:** Shane Bauer (left) and Sarah Shourd.

PICTURE / AP

research operation, ordering scientists to carry out experiments using uranium deuteride. The compound's only use is to detonate an atomic weapon.

The United Nation's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said that Iran had "stonewalled" its questions.

Iran claims that its nuclear research, which has been censured by three rounds of international sanctions, is for the "purely peaceful" purposes of generating power and



incoming missile, launched from the Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean. An aide to O'Reilly estimated the cost at about US\$150 million.

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O'Reilly's comments came the same day that diplomats disclosed concerns among intelligence agencies that Iran tested a key atomic bomb component as recently as 2007. The finding, if proven true, would clash with Iran's assertion that its nuclear work is for civilian use.

Western officials said that spy agencies and other organisations had unearthed documents dating from 2005 that purported to show Iran was attempting to develop military technology to use in its nuclear programme.

The sources said Iranians had experimented with tritium, deuterium and beryllium materials. All three trigger an explosion by setting off an uncontrollable reaction in highly enriched uranium or plutonium.

A leaked document contained instructions from Mohsen Fakhirzadeh, the head of Iran's



**Josh Fattal**

conducting medical research.

Diplomats said the breadth of exposures over Iran's activities demonstrated it was seeking an atomic weapon.

UN inspectors have separately been presented with evidence that a second prominent scientist, Ferrydoon Abbasi, led a 21-member research team conducting parallel experiments on tritium — also a

nuclear trigger — at Imam Hussein University in north-east Tehran. The IAEA has also confronted Tehran with allegations over experiments with beryllium dating back to 2003.

Iran has said the documents were fabrications by Western agencies.

Meanwhile, Iran said yesterday that a court will try three Americans who wandered across the border from Iraq last July and became ensnared in a bitter standoff with the West over Tehran's nuclear programme.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki did not say when the trial would begin or even what the Americans were charged with, other than that they had "suspicious aims." Last month, Iran's chief prosecutor said they were accused of spying.

"They will be tried by Iran's judiciary system and verdicts will be issued," Mottaki told a news conference. He said the three were still being interrogated.

In Washington, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the Iranian move was "totally unfounded" and appealed anew to authorities to release the trio.

The three, Shane Bauer, 27, Sarah Shourd, 31, and Josh Fattal, 27, — all graduates of the University of California at Berkeley — had been trekking in Iraq's northern Kurdistan region when they accidentally crossed into Iran, according to their relatives.

— *Telegraph Group Ltd, AP*