

## Opening Statement, Rep. Seth Moulton

### Missile Defense and Missile Defeat Programmatic Updates

15 April 2026

Thank you, Chairman DesJarlais, and thanks again to all the witnesses for your testimony today, and for your work to strengthen this nation's strategic defense. Before we start, I wanted to acknowledge that this will be LTG Gainey's last committee event before his retirement. He served for the past 36 years in uniform. General Gainey, we are grateful for your service and for the work you have done for both the Army and Joint Force to address the ever-growing threat of drones and unmanned systems with your leadership at Space and Missile Defense Command and previously as the Director of the Joint Counter-UAS office.

Missile defense has been front and center for the last six weeks, as we have seen American missile defenses save the lives of an untold number of servicemembers and civilians. But we are also plainly seeing its limitations. The hundreds of wounded servicemembers and the families of the seven Americans killed by enemy fire know those limits all too well. Missile defense is not impenetrable and never will be. It is an incredibly finite resource. In many cases, we are spending millions of dollars a shot to take out \$50,000 drones. And most importantly, missile defense is not a strategy. Our president has chosen to spend down billions of dollars and years' worth of interceptor production, and with Iran having locked down the Strait, doubled oil prices, alienated our allies, strengthened China's hand, forced the president to remove oil sanctions against Russia and, unbelievable, Iran itself, and directly project more power against us and our allies than it ever has—all for the cost of ballistic missiles they will rebuild even while they still have plenty to shoot, he is now losing the war he started. Missile defense

will not absolve us of poor strategic choices, and it cannot prevent our adversaries from finding other ways to inflict harm.

Every conversation about missile defense – both policy and programs – must acknowledge these limitations honestly.

As you all know, I am not anti-missile defense. There are many areas where there is strong consensus on this committee. We have made robust investments in sensing and tracking. We have helped mature the regional missile defense capabilities that are truly miracles of engineering and are saving lives in the Gulf today: Patriot, Aegis, and THAAD. And we are defending against the strategic threat posed by rogue nations, such as North Korea, who may not be deterred by mutually assured destruction.

But when it comes to the strategy, we continue to have serious disagreements, many of us here with you, and the vast majority of Republicans who now sing Golden Dome's praises with themselves just hours before Trump announced his scheme. I've sat on this committee for years, and have never heard a colleague, Republican or Democrat, advocate spending half a trillion dollars on a system to protect us from ballistic missiles but will, in fact, probably be quite easy for our adversaries to engineer around. I understand that someone willing to take on the Pope in the image of Jesus Christ probably thinks himself a greater theorist of strategic deterrence than everyone else as well. But our job is not to blindly answer to the president, it is to ask tough questions on behalf of the American people.

It is clear to me now that reality does not match what President Trump has promised the American people – “an impenetrable shield against all threats.” Let me be clear, just like other promises this president has made, like how tariffs will

not impact American cost of living, or that we do not “need” commerce that transits the Strait of Hormuz, Trump’s version of Golden Dome is a lie. Experts from both sides of the aisle have admitted this. Both from a technical and fiscal perspective, it is impossible to defend all of the United States from any kind of threat that could be launched at us. As the Middle East shows, even the best missile defense is imperfect.

Perhaps if we could have a debate on what exactly is envisioned for Golden Dome, we might be able to agree that the right answer is a more limited version of homeland missile defense. We might even be able to agree that we shouldn’t touch the underpinning of our strategic stability that has kept the world away from nuclear war. That nuclear deterrence, based on the concept of mutually assured destruction, is a far better way to deal with Russian and Chinese nukes than trying to shoot them all down.

Instead, the administration has chosen to classify nearly everything when it comes to the architecture and the cost of the system. I have to assume this is being done on purpose by Pete Hegseth, so that he does not have to own up to the fact that Golden Dome is yet again another lie by the president to the American people. It’s convenient for him because he has no problem sharing classified information himself whenever he’d like to impress a friend.

As we continue to evaluate DoD missile defense programs, I will continue to ask the hard questions. How will expanding U.S. missile defense today impact strategic stability tomorrow? Does it raise the incentive for our adversaries to strike first? We are already in an arms race – will this accelerate it? Do these choices make our nation and our world more or less safe? These are the questions and debates we must have on this subcommittee. This is the oversight we are Constitutionally required to provide – not just with an eye to this year’s budget and

NDAA, but with a view towards how our decisions will impact the world we leave for our children.