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Trump Hypes Missile Defense Systems Targeting Iran, North Korea

By Jason Ditz
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Within mere minutes of his inauguration, President Trump’s White House website laid out a series of new policy positions, including a promise to develop a “state-of-the-art” missile defense system to protect against both Iran and North Korea.

The statement was prominently positioned, underscoring it as a point of emphasis for the new administration, but provided no details on what the announcement actually means, and indeed whether or not it marks any change from the existing missile defense systems the US has been throwing money at over the years.

The US started bankrolling anti-Iran missile defense systems way back in the Bush Administration’s waning years, a sore subject in US-Russia relations because Bush was positioning them all right along the Russian frontier, and far outside the range of Iran’s best

missiles. In more recent years, the US has been scrambling to get a system in place in South Korea targeting their neighbor to the north as well.

In both cases, the systems are massively expensive and their reliability is a matter of considerable debate, with their survival largely dependent on hypothetical best-case numbers, and the reality that any incident in which they were put to a real test would be so calamitous that the system would be the least of everyone's concerns.

It is something of a surprise that Trump would be emphasizing the pricey missile defense systems, however, given his inclination to push for savings on weapons programs, and promises to get runaway spending on such programs under control.