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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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PROCUREMENT AND SYSTEMS  
ACQUISITION DIVISION

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The Honorable  
The Secretary of Defense



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Dear Mr. Secretary:

During our review of the Army's Advanced Ballistic Missile Defense technology program, we noted a problem area which we believe should be brought to your attention while you are in the process of formulating the fiscal year 1975 budget for the Advanced Ballistic Missile Defense Agency (ABMDA).

ABMDA is charged with finding solutions to certain unresolved ballistic missile defense problem areas which it considers to be critical. However, despite a need for additional research funds for these areas, funds are being allocated to other projects to which ABMDA has assigned a lower priority. We believe that you may wish to consider whether the level of ABMDA's expenditures for these lower priority projects is appropriate in view of the need for additional funds to solve technology problems which have been assigned a higher priority.

A case in point is the planned procurement and construction of the Advanced Field Array Radar (AFAR) at Kwajalein for the primary purpose of providing ABMDA with a field test facility. Procurement and installation will cost ABMDA about \$90 million, and the facility will not be operational before 1977. As a consequence, critical detection and discrimination research work may be delayed by several years. We believe that ABMDA could reduce costs and obtain the needed data sooner by modifying and using the Safeguard Missile Site Radar at Kwajalein and/or the Site Defense Radar as a field test facility.

Another example is the Parallel Element Processing Ensemble Computer (PEPE). Although ABMDA has demonstrated through hardware tests that PEPE could increase the capacity of the Site Defense computer, it is continuing fabrication and testing. However, since PEPE is not needed by ABMDA, engineering development and procurement should be funded by the Site Defense Project Office when and if a valid requirement for PEPE is established. This would free resources for application to ABMDA's primary mission.

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Another example is the HIT program. This concept originally involved the deployment of a large number of nonexplosive vehicles on a single booster. Each vehicle would intercept an incoming re-entry vehicle. Because the ABM treaty specifically prohibits such a system, work is now limited to a single vehicle on each booster which would severely limit its potential usefulness even if its performance can be demonstrated. There have been significant cost overruns and ABMDA has questioned whether the experimental results of the HIT program would be valid for predicting performance of a tactical system.

In all these cases the emphasis on lower priority programs has detracted resources from the more difficult critical problems of ballistic missile defense for which there is no satisfactory solution at this time, particularly multiple nuclear effects and target detection and discrimination. If ABMDA is allowed to gravitate away from its high priority assignment of developing technology to resolve problem areas, the operational capabilities of any future ballistic missile defense system may be seriously impaired. We therefore believe that you may wish to review ABMDA's allocation of its resources in relation to its established priorities.

Copies of this letter are being provided to the Chairmen, Senate and House Armed Services and Appropriations Committees; the Secretary of the Army; Assistant Secretary of the Army (R&D); and the Director of the Advanced Ballistic Missile Defense Agency.

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Sincerely yours,



Richard W. Gutmann  
Director