

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 22, 2013

Vice Admiral James Syring
Director, Missile Defense Agency
5700 18th Street, Bldg 245
Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-5573

Dear Vice Admiral Syring,

I am pleased that the Missile Defense Agency is moving forward with plans to determine the feasibility of a third Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) site. The GMD system is a vital asset in protecting the homeland from a variety of ballistic missile threats. As MDA examines candidates for this third site, I want to express my strong support for Camp Ravenna Joint Military Training Center in Ravenna, Ohio. The base's strategic location, cost-effective operation, optimal size, access to robust regional infrastructure, and ability to prioritize the missile defense mission make it well-suited for this important role.

As you know, the current GMD configuration consisting of 30 interceptors at Fort Greely, Alaska and 4 interceptors at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California is designed primarily to defend against a West Coast threat such as a North Korean missile launch. However, it is not ideal for defending against an ICBM launched from the Middle East, and given Iran's steadily increasing ballistic missile capabilities, there is an acute need to address the weaknesses in the current configuration. Despite the cancellation of plans to deploy 10 Ground-Based Interceptors (GBI) in Poland as well as plans to deploy 24 SM-3 block IIB missiles in Poland as part of the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA), the recent decision to deploy an additional 14 Ground-Based Interceptors to Alaska reflects the strategic imperative to confront the growing Iranian and North Korean threats, even if it represents a suboptimal approach.

While the move to add additional interceptors in Alaska would increase U.S. capabilities, it is a poor substitute for an East Coast site because it does not exploit the advantages offered by a geographically-dispersed missile defense system. Placing GBI's at geographically-distinct locations creates a layered defense system that allows for maximum battle space to target and engage incoming threats by providing the warfighter with the critical "shoot-look-shoot" capability.

Camp Ravenna is uniquely well-suited to delivering this enhanced capability. The base's strategic geographic location in Northeast Ohio, optimal size, access to robust regional infrastructure, as well as the cost-effective and professional Ohio National Guard staff make it a prime option for the third GMD site. Furthermore, the addition of a GMD site will not compete with existing priorities or land uses of the military services.

I am pleased MDA has recognized Camp Ravenna's potential to contribute to the national missile defense mission. I firmly believe that the base's unique characteristics make it the ideal location for our nation's next missile defense site. I look forward to continuing to work with you

and your MDA staff, Ohio National Guard leadership, and community leaders as you move forward in your next steps of site selection.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rob Portman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Rob Portman
U.S. Senator