

Environmental Extremists Prefer US and Alaska Defenseless

By Representative John Harris, R - District 35

It comes as no surprise that a coalition of leftist political organizations would file an environmental lawsuit opposing the construction of facilities for the National Missile Defense system here in Alaska. Anyone who has observed the obstructionist tactics of these groups over the years would have expected them to target the missile defense system at some point.

What this latest lawsuit shows most clearly, however, is that their objective is not the protection of the environment so much as it is to wield inordinate and misplaced political power they have gained through manipulation of the public process.

The fact is, each of the sites to be included in the NMD system here in Alaska has been studied and environmental assessment documents are available that detail the potential impacts for each of them. These environmental studies were the subject of public hearings in locations throughout the effected areas of Alaska. If the environmental organizations feel they didn't get enough opportunity to give their opinions during the public process, I don't think they will find much sympathy among Alaskans. It galls me to hear their spokesperson claim that Alaskans don't want the missile defense system here. Aside from the small circle of tree-huggers and left-wing radicals in their organizations, I haven't met any Alaskans who don't want NMD.

Furthermore, the environmental impact statement and other assessment documents support the construction of a 100-missile system. The current effort of the Department of Defense would construct facilities for FIVE missiles, not 100. It is beyond logic that the environmental groups would advocate for new environmental studies when the project is 95 percent smaller than originally planned.

What's going on here? These left-wing groups are not using the court system and the National Environmental Protection Act out of concern for the environment, but for political purposes. They attempt to scare Alaskans by using superheated rhetoric, such as referring to Alaska as "ground zero," implying that Delta Junction or Kodiak will be the first target of America's enemies. This is just more of the

same kind of nonsense we heard when these same groups pushed the “Nuclear-Free Zone” on us a decade or so ago. And since the NMD system has won bipartisan support in both the Congress and the Alaska State Legislature, the opponents take their spurious arguments to court.

My only conclusion is that, for some unfathomable reason, the left-wing extremists want to see America defenseless. If President Bush chooses to withdraw from the ABM treaty, which Russia has ignored countless times, then the environmental left will use the American court system and NEPA to try to stop missile defense. I am as opposed to war as the next guy, but the obstructionists seem to believe the best defense is not to have a defense. I think the lessons of history show that the best way to defend your country is to make sure the world knows you are willing to fight for it. And in the post-Cold War world we are living in, a missile defense shield simply makes ultimate sense.

It is my hope and expectation that the court will recognize this lawsuit for what it is – a political ploy to delay NMD – and throw it out.

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(John Harris, a lifelong Alaskan, represents District 35 (Prince William Sound, Glennallen and Delta Junction) in the Alaska House of Representatives).