

Deflating missile shield madness

President **Obama** has scrapped **George W. Bush's** plan to build a "missile shield" in Poland and the Czech Republic. Here's what I'd like to say about that:

Hooray, three cheers and Hal-lelujah.

by Donald Kaul
Columnist



It was one of the sillier schemes of an administration that was a mosaic of silly schemes, some more lethal than others.

The Bush people claimed it was designed to protect Eastern Europe from nuclear-tipped long-range ballistic missiles launched from Iran. There are a couple of flaws in this analysis.

- Iran doesn't have any long-range ballistic missiles.
- It doesn't have any nuclear bombs either.
- If it did have them, why would it attack Eastern Europe with them?

OK, I'm being disingenuous here. Maybe someday Iran will develop long-range missiles. Maybe it will even get a nuclear bomb or two. And maybe its target will be Israel or even the United States. Would we not then risk being the subject of nuclear blackmail?

The answer is no. Israel has its own missile shield it's very satisfied with, thank you very much. It also (almost certainly) has a nuclear bomb. Any attempt by Iran or anyone else to attack it would be dealt with severely, as in annihilation. Ditto squared with the United States.

The great fallacy about a nuclear sneak attack is that it is sneaky. It isn't. It arrives with a return address and the perpetrator has a half-life of about a half-hour.

Iran isn't about to make itself into one big suicide bomber, nor is any other country. If a "rogue state," as the CIA likes to call them, wanted to attack us with a nuclear device, I would think it would try to smuggle the bomb into the country in pieces, assemble it here, and set it off in an abandoned garage in a major city.

That would make it a lot more difficult to trace. Not impossible, however, and I'm sure we'd find a way.

There's another minor flaw in the missile shield: It doesn't

work.

There has never been a successful test of the missile shield technology that wasn't fixed, generally by putting a homing device on the target.

It's been 25 years since **Ronald Reagan** came up with his "Star Wars" idea, and we still don't have a way to make it work. The two-stage rocket at the heart of the Polish-Czech systems has never been successfully tested.

Let me repeat this: It doesn't work.

I don't think Israel's works either, actually, but so long as they advertise it as working their enemies will think twice about finding out for sure. That suggests the real utility of these "shields" lies in the gullibility of your enemy.

I don't know, that seems like relying on your imaginary playmate for help in a fight.

The Russians seem pleased that we dropped the missile-shield. They're convinced that its real purpose was to increase our first-strike capability against them. (They're as crazy as we are.)

This, of course, has convinced the Republicans that Obama has done a terrible thing and put the country at risk. The move "does little more than empower Russia and Iran at the expense of our allies in Europe," according to House Minority Leader **John Boehner**.

Possibly to allay such fears, Obama is replacing the shield with one that features smaller missiles, designed to shoot down rockets that Iran actually possesses but won't be able to threaten Russia with—Star Wars Lite.

Which is a decent compromise I suppose, except for one thing.

It won't work either.

So, to review the bidding, we have done away with a system that won't work to protect an ally that's not in danger from a threat that doesn't exist, and replaced it with another system that does pretty much the same thing, but less threateningly.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is what passes for progress in the sorry world we live in.

Donald Kaul is a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington correspondent who, by his own account, is right more than he's wrong. Email: dkaul2@earthlink.net. Distributed by MinutemanMedia.org.

Wallace Taylor

—Champion of the Week



Wallace Taylor, originally from British Guyana, moved with his family to DeKalb County more than 20 years ago. Taylor, a 4th degree black belt, runs the martial arts program at the Tucker Recreation Center as a taekwondo instructor and is a volunteer for The American Cancer Society.

At the recreation center he teaches classes for all ages and belt levels as well as classes designed specifically for special needs groups. He also conducts free female self defense courses and seminars.

I was motivated to do this because I saw that parts of DeKalb had disproportionately high levels of crime. It was a need I felt had to be addressed, even in

a small way. This was focused on prevention and awareness as much as it was on self-defense, said Taylor.

Taylor has also worked with a group of more than 200 students at Warren Technical School, an alternative high school in Chamblee for students facing learning, physical and emotional challenges. He said he is motivated by the disparities of health care among some minority groups and wants to help bridge the gap. I have found that most diseases are stress related and are completely preventable. I am doing my part to close the gap, Taylor said.

His students come to him not just to learn martial arts but also for advice and guidance,

said **Suchi Patton**. His compassion, love and understanding for his students is something they have come to rely on and draw strength from. According to Patton, Taylor upholds old school values of truth, honor and loyalty in a world where more and more people find it easy to justify living outside any rules.

He loves working at the Tucker Recreation Center and has poured his passions into making it a better place for the people in his community. He should be recognized for his outstanding work in helping his fellow human beings, she continued.

If you would like to nominate someone to be considered as a future Champion of the Week, please contact **Kathy Mitchell** at kathy@dekalbchamp.com or at 404-373-7779, ext. 104.

A health system that bankrupts families

America's corporatized health care system keeps producing unpleasant surprises.

by Jim Hightower
Columnist



We've known for some time that this system, which puts profit above care, is morally bankrupt—but now we learn that it's bankrupting hundreds of thousands of American families. In fact, the system's exorbitant medical bills have become the No. 1 cause of personal bankruptcies in the USA.

Researchers from Harvard and Ohio State recently conducted a national, random-sample survey of more than 2,300 families who filed for bankruptcy in 2007. As they report in the *American Journal of Medicine*, 60 percent of those families were forced over the edge by high health care bills. The situation is likely much worse today, since this survey was taken before the current spike in job losses.

Here's an even more sobering finding: The great majority of those bankrupted were not uninsured poor folks, but middle-class, well-educated people—75 percent of whom had health insurance! As one of the researchers, Dr. **David Himmelstein**, put it: "Unless you're **Warren Buffett**, your family is just one serious

illness away from bankruptcy."

What a disgrace for the richest country in the history of the world. Indeed, America's deplorable connection between physical illness

and fiscal disaster does not occur in other highly developed countries, because they provide national health insurance for all of their citizens.

Yet, too many of our representatives in Washington don't really want to change our current system of health care profiteering. Instead, they merely want to tinker with reform by extending our corporatized system to more people. That will neither improve health care nor prevent more of those financial catastrophes. We need a complete overhaul of the system by adopting a single-payer method of insurance coverage for everyone.

To help push change that works, contact Physicians for a National Health Program: www.pnhp.org.

For more information on Jim Hightower's work — and to subscribe to his award-winning monthly newsletter, *The Hightower Lowdown*, visit www.jimhightower.com. Distributed by MinutemanMedia.org.