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**ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2600 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2600**



INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY POLICY

Mr. Jerry Bussell
Special Advisor to the Governor
Nevada Homeland Security
101 N. Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

MAY 20 2003

Dear Mr. Bussell:

Thank you for your letter of 19 May requesting the position of the Department of Defense on protecting our country and the State of Nevada from ballistic missile attack. Throughout his administration, President Bush has made clear that the United States will protect our citizens against weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them, including ballistic missiles.

Ballistic missiles have proliferated on a global basis and are in the hands of over two dozen states, many of which have chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons programs underway. North Korea, for example, has had an active ballistic missile program for years, and has developed a wide range of offensive missiles. North Korea's Taepo Dong II long-range missile is capable of reaching parts of the United States with a nuclear weapon-sized payload, and it could be flight-tested at any time. Iran and other countries also are working on space-launch vehicles and intercontinental-range ballistic missiles that could be ready for testing in the next few years.

We are moving forward to help protect American territory and forces abroad, and our allies and friends, against missiles of all ranges. Missile Defenses have an important role to play in this effort, which is why in December 2002 the President directed the Department of Defense to begin deploying initial missile defense capabilities in 2004. These missile defense capabilities will serve as a starting point for the evolutionary improvement of our missile defense capabilities over time.

Missile defenses are an essential element of our overall national security policy to transform U.S. defense capabilities to meet the requirements of a dynamic international security environment. Our initial missile defense capabilities will be modest, but will continue to improve as budgets and technology allow, and as developments in the threat necessitate.

Sincerely,

J.D. Crouch II