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Ballistic Missile Defense and Security Threats: Whistle-Blowing Syndromes

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Abstract. This article describes misinformation and disinformation threats to United States Government (USG) security that have been too often ignored in public discourse on ballistic missile defense policy.

Public discourse in the USG on the appropriateness of developing and eventually fielding a ballistic missile defense against ballistic missile attacks by so-called rogue nations has centered on the nature of the ballistic missile threat, the technical and cost feasibility of a defense, and various international and domestic political agendas. These aspects of public discourse certainly are germane to USG security--and to that of USG allies that might want to join in such a defense program as well as neutrals, adversaries, and non-state political actors who can be variously affected.

Another aspect that is less often attended to--except during interludes of media frenzy--comprises components of the whistle-blowing syndrome. This syndrome includes contemplated and actual misbehavior on the part of representatives of what former US president Dwight Eisenhower termed the military-industrial (MI) complex. This misbehavior includes misinformation and disinformation about the progress and capabilities of military science and technology on the part of those entrusted with developing said science and technology. In its most common form, a representative of the MI complex alleges that others in the complex have been engaged in the above misbehavior. Often, the alleged quickly becomes a former MI representative. At Issue is whether misinformation and disinformation largely characterize the allegations, counters to the allegations, or some combination of the two.

A recent example of the above involves a (now) former senior engineer of a well-known military contractor who has publicly charged the company with faking tests and evaluations of a key component of a proposed ballistic missile defense system and then firing her when she protested. Of interest in the allegations and counter-allegations is differential social labeling of observed behavior. As with the aphorism "one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist," one observes that the alleged's "inadequate system" become an "evolving system." A "defect" becomes a characteristic in the process of being "improved." Failures in "realistic" testing environments occur in "highly improbable" ones that are "not within...requirements." "Impermissibly manipulating test results" become selecting a "more favorable stream of data." And an "almost uniquely qualified" expert becomes "completely off target, quick with her diatribes yet misreading her own tests and [the company's] process of product development."

The whistle-blowing syndrome has intrapsychic, interpersonal, organizational, and ecological components. The intrapsychic involves notions of right and wrong and of what wrongs can be feigned as right or rights as wrong. The interpersonal involves clashing personality chemistries and perceptions of used and abused authority. The organizational involves macro and micro-cultures that explicitly and implicitly stipulate acceptable and unacceptable cognitive attributions and behavior. The ecological involves the various contingent legal and financial systems in which and with which the intrapsychic, interpersonal, and organizational components interact. Much of these interactions are fueled by the basic motive of individual security--mental, physical, and even spiritual. Unfortunately, security of the nation-state or non-state political actor can too easily be lost on the shuffle. (See Anderson, C. (1993).

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Michigan gets an expensive lesson. *Science*, 262, 23; Broad, W.J. (March 7, 2000). Missile contractor doctored tests, ex-employee charges. *The New York Times*, p. A1; A19; Near, J.P., & Miceli, M. P. (1987). Whistle-blowers in organizations: Dissidents or reformers? *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 9, 321-368; Rothschild, J., & Meithe, T. D. (1994). Whistleblowing as resistance in modern work organizations: The politics of revealing organizational deception and abuse. In J.M. Jermier & D. Knights (Eds.). *Resistance and power in organizations* (pp. 252-273). London, England UK: Routledge; Scarr, S., & Ernhart, C. B. (1993). Of whistleblowers, investigators, and judges. *Ethics & Behavior*, 3, 199-206; The psychology of national security organizations: A Kleinian analysis. (January 31, 1997). *IBPP*, 1(10). (Keywords: Ballistic Missile Defense, National Security, Whistle-blowing.)