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## The U.S. Army and the Golden Dome Program

### What Is Golden Dome?

The Golden Dome for America (Golden Dome)—initially known as the Iron Dome for America—refers to an integrated homeland air and missile defense system being developed by the Department of Defense (DOD), which is “using a secondary Department of War designation” under Executive Order (E.O.) 14347, dated September 5, 2025. President Donald J. Trump introduced the program in E.O. 14186 of January 27, 2025. According to a May 2025 Pentagon press release, DOD plans to combine a range of capabilities to create a “system of systems” to protect the United States from “aerial attacks from any foe.” Golden Dome’s development is managed by DOD’s Office of Golden Dome for America, led by Senate-confirmed U.S. Space Force General Michael A. Guetlein, who reports directly to the Deputy Secretary of Defense (who is using “Deputy Secretary of War” as a “secondary title” under E.O. 14347). The system’s operational lead is the Army Space and Missile Defense Command (ASMDC) in support of U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM).

Some Members of Congress have considered information released by DOD about Golden Dome to be insufficient and have requested additional information. In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026, Congress required DOD to submit an annual report on Golden Dome efforts that is to include a threat assessment, system architecture, and cost and schedule estimate (P.L. 119-60, §1652). President Trump has said the system “should be fully operational before the end of my term.” General Guetlein has testified the system will cost \$185 billion through delivery in 2035. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the system will cost \$1.2 trillion to develop, deploy, and operate over 20 years.

### Army Command and Control

On January 15, 2026, NORTHCOM established Joint Task Force (JTF)-Gold led by Army Lieutenant General Sean Gainey, who also serves as commanding general of ASMDC. JTF-Gold and ASMDC are co-located at Peterson Space Force Base in Colorado. Reportedly, in fall 2025, the Army approved the transfer of the 32<sup>nd</sup> and 263<sup>rd</sup> Army Air and Missile Defense Commands from the then Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) and Army Northern Command to ASMDC. By placing JTF-Gold under the ASMDC commander, the ASMDC commander reportedly becomes “the operational lead for Golden Dome activities in support of NORTHCOM, while also giving that headquarters control of the Army formations most directly tied to domestic air and missile defense.”

### Selected Golden Dome-Associated Army Systems

During what a press report described as a Golden Dome “first look” on April 23, 2026, numerous Army systems that could be part of the initial iteration of Golden Dome were on public display at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story in Virginia. According to the press report, program officials did not address the requisite number of systems or those systems’ potential locations and costs. Some of the major Army systems on display are briefly described in the following sections.

#### Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)

THAAD is a mobile anti-ballistic missile system designed to destroy short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missiles in their terminal phase using hit-to-kill technology. The THAAD interceptor can intercept enemy missiles both inside and outside the atmosphere and reportedly defends targets at ranges of 150-200 kilometers (km). The Army currently has eight THAAD batteries in the Active Component and has no plans to field additional batteries, according to information provided to CRS by the Army. A September 2025 American Enterprise Institute (AEI) working paper estimates incremental costs to procure a single THAAD battery and 192 interceptors to be \$2.73 billion.

#### Patriot

Patriot is an acronym for “Phased Array Tracking Radar to Intercept on Target.” Patriot is a mobile air defense system capable of defeating both high-performance aircraft and tactical ballistic missiles. Patriot can also be employed against cruise missiles and certain types of uncrewed aerial systems and drones. According to information provided to CRS by the Army, 15 Patriot battalions are currently in the Active Component with planned growth for three additional battalions: one battalion each year from FY2029-FY2031. A four battery Patriot battalion, equipped with the Integrated Battle Command System (IBCS) and the Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense Sensor (LTAMDS), costs an estimated \$1.792 billion.

#### Integrated Battle Command System (IBCS)

IBCS is described as the centerpiece of the Army’s Integrated Air and Missile Defense (AIAMD) capabilities. It replaces legacy command and control (C2) systems in THAAD and Patriot units, providing 360-degree protection coverage and, according to the system’s developer Northrop Grumman, “expands battlespace for longer range intercepts and defense depth.”

## Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense Sensor (LTAMDS)

According to the Army, “LTAMDS is the Army’s next-generation radar designed to counter advanced and evolving threats, providing increased detection range, improved classification, and all-sector coverage.” LTAMDS is intended to replace legacy Patriot unit radars, and a prototype has been tested. According to its developer Raytheon, LTAMDS is “designed to defeat advanced and next-generation threats, including hypersonic weapons.”

## Army Budget-Related Issues

In its FY2027 budget, DOD requested \$17.5 billion for a “Golden Dome for America Fund,” including \$434 million for Army Operations and Maintenance and Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation. The Army also requested \$11.4 billion for THAAD procurement and \$12.2 billion for Patriot Advanced Capability-3 Missile Segment Enhancement (PAC-3 MSE) procurement. DOD would be able to allocate these systems to homeland or theater defense. Of the \$17.5 billion, \$17.1 billion (98%) was requested as *mandatory* funding for Congress to provide in a reconciliation measure (as opposed to *discretionary* funding for Congress to provide in a regular annual appropriations act). Additionally, 92% of the amount the Army requested for THAAD procurement and 89% of the amount the service requested for PAC-3 MSE were mandatory funds. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy Marc Berkowitz, who is using “Assistant Secretary of War for Space Policy” as a “secondary title” under Executive Order 14347 dated September 5, 2025, testified that mandatory funding provides speed and flexibility. An observer noted that putting the bulk of the request in mandatory funds puts the future of Golden Dome “on unstable footing.” The budget reconciliation process may also limit Congress’s opportunity for oversight if, for example, funds are provided for general purposes without specifying line-item amounts for DOD programs, projects, and activities as requested by the Administration.

Recent DOD budget requests and operational requirements indicate growing demand for missile procurement and replenishment. The department has increased funding for munitions, with requests for missile procurement nearly tripling in FY2027 to \$95 billion as part of broader efforts to rebuild stockpiles and address operational demand. Taken together, these trends suggest scaling a layered Golden Dome architecture could require sustained investment in interceptor procurement, industrial base capacity, and long-term sustainment. DOD and industry have announced several joint agreements to increase production capacity. Congress may weigh these costs against competing priorities, including force readiness, modernization, and overall Army personnel requirements.

## Potential Issues for Congress

### Numbers of Army Systems and Units Required.

Although the Army has identified some potential elements of the Golden Dome architecture, the service has not published how many systems or types of units will be needed to establish Golden Dome. As specific Golden Dome requirements emerge, Congress could examine the planned numbers of Army units and weapons systems that

are to be dedicated to Golden Dome, including associated budgetary implications.

### Time Required to Field Army Golden Dome Systems and Units.

Congress could also examine the time requirements for industry to produce and field Golden Dome-dedicated systems and for the Army to establish associated units. This may include assessing resource needs for replenishing regional stockpiles, increasing homeland defense stockpiles, and filling foreign military sales orders. As system and interceptor production could take several fiscal years, such an examination could help future appropriations decisions.

### Stationing of Army Golden Dome Systems and Units.

Once the Army has established quantities and types of Golden Dome systems and units, Congress could review associated stationing plans, including when and where new units are planned to be stationed; funding requirements, including military construction (MILCON); and socioeconomic impacts on affected local communities.

**Army Golden Dome Personnel Issues.** Golden Dome could have implications for Army personnel requirements, particularly in air and missile defense, space operations, and command-and-control specialties. The Army’s current IAMD force relies heavily on specialized military occupational specialties (MOS) within the Air Defense Artillery (ADA) branch. Golden Dome could increase demand for these specialties, which have historically experienced high operational tempo and persistent global demand. In addition, Golden Dome could require greater integration of personnel from emerging fields, including space and cyber domains. Recruiting, training, and retaining personnel with these technical skill sets may present challenges for the Army. The Government Accountability Office has identified workforce gaps in cyber and other high-skill areas within the services. Expanding Army force structure to support additional Golden Dome requirements could require adjustments to training pipelines, soldier incentives, and force management policies.

**Potential Role of the Army National Guard.** At present, the Army National Guard (ARNG) has three ADA brigades: the 164<sup>th</sup> ADA in Florida, the 174<sup>th</sup> ADA in Ohio, and the 678<sup>th</sup> ADA in South Carolina. These brigades specialize in short-range air defense (SHORAD). In addition, the Colorado-based Army National Guard 100<sup>th</sup> Missile Defense Brigade operates the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) System, which defends the United States against intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). As a possible means to staff new Golden Dome-dedicated units without increasing Army end strength, Congress and the Army might examine the feasibility of converting some or all three ARNG SHORAD brigades to Golden Dome units, perhaps using the National Guard’s 100<sup>th</sup> Missile Defense Brigade as a model.

### Related Reports

CRS In Focus IF13115, *Defense Primer: The Golden Dome for America*, by Hannah D. Dennis.

CRS In Focus IF12645, *The Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) System*, by Andrew Feickert.

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