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The U.S. Army and the Golden Dome Program

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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 (AMD) system being developed by the Department of Defense (DOD), which is "using a secondary Department of War designation" under Executive Order (E.O.) 14347 of 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 inadequate and have requested additional information. In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026 (P.L. 119-60, §1652), Congress required DOD to submit an annual report on Golden Dome efforts, to include a threat assessment, system architecture, and cost and schedule estimate. 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 32nd and 263rd Army Air and Missile Defense Commands from the then Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) and U.S. Army North 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

On April 23, 2026, during what a press report described as a Golden Dome "first look," numerous Army systems that could be part of Golden Dome were on public display at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, VA. According to the press report, program officials did not address the requisite number of systems or 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 capabilities. It replaces legacy command and control 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.

DOD 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 Army personnel requirements.

First Golden Dome Site Selected

In August 2026, General Guetlein reportedly announced that the Pentagon had established Golden Dome's first operational site at Fort Story, VA. This action was reportedly intended to

> [position] elements of the emerging homeland missile defense architecture on the East Coast as the military begins building an active defense of domestic airspace intended eventually to protect population centers including New York City and Washington against cruise missiles, hypersonic weapons and other advanced threats.

It was also noted that General Guetlein "did not identify additional locations or say how many operational sites the Pentagon plans to establish as part of the nationwide architecture" and that no specific systems or units were identified for eventual deployment to Fort Story.

First Army Unit Selected

Reportedly, the Army has chosen a battalion-sized unit, which is to include elements from other echelons, to be the Army's "initial contribution to Golden Dome." The unidentified unit was chosen from existing force structure; the systems that the new unit are to operate were also not identified. The Army reportedly plans "to do a lot of experimentation and test[ing] with this unit to make sure that we're ready to fight with it when it's delivered."

Potential Issues for Congress

Potential oversight issues include the following:

Numbers of Army Systems and Units Required

Although the Army has identified some potential elements of the Golden Dome architecture, it has not indicated how many systems or types and numbers of units will be needed to establish Golden Dome. As specific requirements emerge, Congress could examine planned numbers of Army units and weapons systems that are to be dedicated to Golden Dome. Congress could examine the time requirements for industry to produce and field Golden Dome-dedicated systems. As system and interceptor production could take several fiscal years, such an examination could inform future appropriations decisions.

Army Golden Dome Fort Story Site

As the Pentagon develops this first operational site, Congress might seek additional information, such as

- What systems and units are planned to be stationed at Fort Story?
- When will these systems and units begin to arrive at Fort Story, and when will they achieve full operational capability?
- What funding is required to support this effort, including associated military construction (MILCON) funding?

Army Golden Dome Personnel Issues

Golden Dome could have implications for Army personnel requirements, particularly in AMD, 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. Recruiting, training, and retaining personnel with required technical skills may present challenges for the Army.

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

Andrew Feickert, Specialist in Military Ground Forces
Hannah D. Dennis, Analyst in U.S. Defense Policy
Robert Holcombe, U.S. Army Fellow

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