

Pentagon infuses additional \$440 million into missile defence to counter North Korea

05/10/2017 09:22 by admin

Washington: The Pentagon is injecting \$440 million more into missile defence, including yet another expansion of its fleet of missile interceptors, to counter North Korea's accelerating push for a nuclear-armed missile capable of hitting the United States.

The Pentagon already had 8.2 billion in its missile defence budget prior to the add-ons.

As a reflection of its urgency, the Pentagon asked Congress to let it shift funds from the current budget rather than wait for the next defence budget. The Pentagon already had \$8.2 billion in its missile defence budget prior to the add-ons.

The Pentagon on Thursday spelled out \$367 million of the shifted money, with the rest expected to be announced later.

The spending has come under increased scrutiny as North Korea's nuclear and missile programs have progressed and critics have questioned whether the Pentagon has developed missile defences that would work in combat.

\$48 million for cyber operations

Some of the additional \$440 million is for projects that are classified secret, including \$48 million more for development of technology for cyber operations, according to a breakdown of the spending by the Pentagon's budget office.

The Pentagon has never acknowledged that it has engaged in cyber operations against North Korea's nuclear or missile programs. The New York Times earlier this year reported that in 2014, then-President Barack Obama ordered Pentagon officials to step up their cyber and electronic strikes against North Korea's missile program in hopes of sabotaging test launches.

The more conventional approach to countering North Korea's missiles is what the Pentagon calls ground-based interceptors, which are anti-missile missiles that would be launched from underground silos at Fort Greely in Alaska in the event of the US deciding to try to shoot down a North Korean missile aimed at the country.

The interceptors are designed to slam into an incoming enemy missile outside the Earth's atmosphere, obliterating it by the force of impact.

Interceptors to get a boost

The \$440 million in extra funds for missile defence include \$128 million to begin a new expansion of the missile interceptor force in Alaska. That includes \$81 million to begin increasing the number of interceptors from 44 to 64, and \$47 million to begin buying parts for 10 of the additional 20 underground silos in which the interceptors are installed.

The Pentagon had not publicly announced that it plans to increase the interceptor force by 20. The decision reflects concern that the current force is inadequate to face a North Korean nuclear and missile threat that is growing faster than anticipated.

- AP