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Future Nightly News Anchor's Cable Show Reported Every Missile Test Failure & Ignored Every Success

Exposing Williams' Anti-Missile Defense Bias

President Bush's decision to deploy the first ten anti-ballistic missile interceptors in Alaska prompted more network derision of the missile defense program on Tuesday. Peter Jennings typified the liberal spin, stressing the costs ("a multi-billion dollar system") while disparaging its capabilities ("even now it is unclear if it will work").

But when it comes to bias against a national missile defense, the new anchors who'll be taking over in the next few years could be even more biased than the old liberals they're replacing. NBC's choice to replace Tom Brokaw in 2004, current CNBC anchor Brian Williams, has never failed to publicize an anti-missile test "failure," yet never bothered to report on any of the five instances when missiles traveling at nearly 15,000 miles per hour were intercepted and destroyed. MRC analyst Ken Shepherd reviewed CNBC's *The News with Brian Williams*, which also aired on MSNBC until July 2002, and documented the anchorman's skewed approach:

■ **October 3, 1999:** On the *NBC Nightly News*, Sunday anchor John Siegenthaler told viewers that "the Pentagon conducted a special test overnight of a high-tech defense system which could eventually protect the United States from nuclear attack. It worked as well as the testers had hoped." Williams' cable show doesn't air on Sundays, but the next night (October 4) he skipped over the successful test, although his show included a *Dateline* report coaching drivers how to use their anti-lock brakes.

■ **January 19, 2000:** This time, the anti-missile missed its target, and Williams pounced. "A serious setback for the Pentagon to report to you tonight," he crowed on *The News*. "A system designed to protect the U.S. from missile attack has failed. Defense officials say it could be weeks before they know just what went wrong here, and now a lot of people are questioning whether it's worth it or not to move ahead with the planned \$13 billion missile defense system."

■ **July 8, 2000:** One of the missiles failed to separate

from its booster rocket, another failure. The attempt was news on a Saturday, but Williams hit the story hard when he got back to work on Monday, July 10. He mocked "a Star Wars test that failed miserably, a \$100 million attempt to make one missile shoot down another literally fizzled. It was supposed to show how easy it was, it was supposed to make it much easier for the President to give the missile shield the go-ahead."

Even "Failures" Supply Valuable Knowledge

"The missile defense program has achieved much and with each additional test more can be achieved. Just as you build a wall by laying one brick at a time, so too the missile defense system is being built one test at a time....By building on the knowledge gained from these tests, this program will build on its present momentum and continue to move steadily forward toward a defense capable of protecting the United States from ballistic missile threats." — Robert Jastrow and Jeff Kueter, *TechCentralStation.com*, Dec. 17.

■ **July 14, 2001:** In a Saturday night test, the military successfully blew apart a missile in flight. The following Monday, however, Williams didn't utter a peep. Instead, his July 16 show focused on the search for Chandra Levy.

■ **December 3, 2001:** On the December 4 *Evening News*, CBS's John Roberts recounted that "the Pentagon's latest missile defense test succeeded." Williams was on the air that night, too, but he

omitted any mention of the successful test.

■ **March 15, 2002:** "The Pentagon says its proposed missile defense system has passed its most complex test yet," ABC's Elizabeth Vargas reported on the March 16 *World News Tonight/Saturday*. Brian Williams wasn't on duty the following Monday, but fill-in anchor Forrest Sawyer kept news of the successful test to himself.

■ **October 14, 2002:** CBS's Dan Rather reported on the fourth consecutive success on the next night's (October 15) *Evening News*, but Williams skipped it.

■ **December 11, 2002:** After ignoring every test since July 2000, one last Wednesday morning finally seemed to suit Williams' agenda. "Another disappointing test run to report for the Pentagon's hugely expensive missile defense system," he intoned that night. No anchor has a more perfect double-standard on missile defense. — Rich Noyes

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