

CRS Report for Congress

Long-Range Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe

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Summary

Successive U.S. administrations have urged the creation of an anti-missile system to protect against threats from rogue states. The Bush Administration believes that North Korea and Iran are strategic threats and questions whether they can be deterred by conventional means. The Administration has built long-range missile defense bases in Alaska and California to protect against North Korean missiles. The system has been tested, with mixed results, and questions have been raised about its effectiveness. The Administration has proposed deploying a ground-based mid-course defense (GMD) element of the larger Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) in Europe to defend against an Iranian missile threat. The system would include 10 interceptors in Poland, and radar in the Czech Republic. Deployment of the European GMD capability is scheduled to be completed by 2013 at a cost of \$4.04 billion.

The proposed U.S. system has encountered resistance in some European countries and beyond. Critics in Poland and the Czech Republic assert that neither country currently faces a notable threat from Iran, but that if American GMD facilities were installed, both countries might be targeted by missiles from rogue states — and possibly from Russia. Some Europeans claim that GMD is another manifestation of American unilateralism, and assert that the Bush Administration did not consult sufficiently with NATO allies or with Russia, which the Administration argues was not the case. Other European leaders, however, support the missile defense project. NATO has also been deliberating long-range missile defense, and has recently taken actions that have been interpreted as an endorsement of the American GMD system.

The GMD plan has also affected U.S.-Russia relations. President Putin has argued that the proposal would reignite the arms race and upset U.S.-Russian-European security relations. U.S. officials dispute Russian objections, noting that Moscow has known of this plan for years and that the interceptors are intended to take out Iranian missiles aimed at Europe or the United States and could not possibly act as a deterrent against Russia. Some argue that Russia has been attempting to foment discord among NATO allies. In June and July 2007, however, Putin offered to cooperate on missile defense, offering the use of a Russian leased radar in Azerbaijan and suggesting that the program be expanded to include other countries, but urging that U.S. missile defense facilities not be built in Poland and the Czech Republic. President Bush welcomed the apparent policy shift in principle, but insisted upon the need for the Eastern European sites. Whatever the final outcome, some observers believe that the recent exchanges between Bush and Putin have served to reduce tensions. Russian cooperation in missile defense could remove an impediment to the program and dampen criticism by European leaders.

Congress has examined the proposed European GMD proposal. Both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees made recommendations that would significantly slow down the effort. This report will be updated periodically.

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Long-Range Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe

Introduction

The Bush Administration has requested funding to begin design, construction and deployment of a ground-based midcourse defense (GMD) element of the Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) in Europe. According to the Administration, the proposed GMD European capability would help defend U.S. forces stationed in Europe, U.S. friends and allies in the region, as well as the United States against long-range ballistic missile threats, namely from Iran. The proposed system would include 10 silo-based interceptors to be deployed in Poland, a fixed radar installation in the Czech Republic, and another transportable radar to be deployed in a country closer to the Middle East. Deployment of the GMD European capability is scheduled to be completed by 2013 at a cost of \$4.04 billion. The prospect of a GMD capability based in Europe raises a number of significant international security and foreign policy questions. Central to the debate for many is how the proposed U.S. system might affect U.S.-European-Russian relations. Thus, Congress' decision on whether to fund the initial program in the FY2008 defense bill will likely revolve around its assessment of broader security policy issues, as well as technical concerns related to the system.

The Threat

The Bush Administration argues that North Korea and Iran constitute major strategic threats. North Korea claims to have tested a nuclear device and has a ballistic missile program. The Administration maintains that Iran is developing a nuclear weapons program as well as long-range ballistic missiles. The Administration regards both countries as unpredictable and dangerous, and does not believe they can be constrained by traditional forms of military deterrence, diplomacy, or arms control.

According to unclassified U.S. intelligence assessments, Iran may be able to develop an ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile) or long-range ballistic missile capability by 2015. Some in Congress and elsewhere share this assessment, but others in the larger international security policy and ballistic missile proliferation community argue that evidence of an Iranian ICBM program is scant and unconvincing. Additionally, the Iranian government reports (which cannot be

verified) that Iran has a limited missile capability with a range of about 1,200 miles¹ and that it has stopped development of ICBM range missiles. Although Europeans are concerned about Iran's suspected nuclear weapons program, some U.S. friends and allies in Europe doubt the Administration's assessment of Iran's possible ICBM capability. Hence, many question the need for a GMD element of the BMDS in Europe.

The System

The U.S. Department of Defense began deploying long-range missile interceptors in Alaska and California in late 2004 to address long-range missile threats from North Korea. Currently, the U.S. GMD element of the BMDS includes about 20 silo-based interceptors in Alaska and several in California. As part of an integrated Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) capability, the United States also has a number of ground-based radars in operation around the world, space-based assets supporting the BMDS mission, command and control networks throughout the United States and the Pacific, as well as ground-mobile and sea-based systems for shorter-range BMD.

What remains necessary as part of the global BMDS, according to the Administration, is an ability in the European theater to defend against intermediate-to-long-range ballistic missiles launched from Iran. The Department of Defense (DOD) argues it is important to U.S. national security interests to deploy a GMD capability in Europe to optimize defensive coverage of the United States and Europe against such threats into Europe.

There have been relatively few flight tests of the deployed GMD element and many experts continue to doubt its effectiveness based on test results to date. The current GMD program began flight tests in 2002. This effort was built on several earlier long-range BMD programs with decidedly mixed results themselves since the early 1980s. Since 2002, a number of GMD flight tests have taken place. Six of these flight tests offered intercept opportunities, with three successful intercepts.² In each of the flight tests most other flight test objectives were met. In 2002, the GMD moved to the operational booster and interceptor. The interceptor system flew two developmental tests in 2003 and 2004, and the GMD element of the BMDS was

¹ There are reports that Iran is developing other medium-range ballistic missiles with ranges greater than those now deployed, but short of what is considered ICBM range (i.e., more than 5,500 kilometers).

² Two tests in March and October 2002 using an older interceptor successfully intercepted their intended targets. Three flight tests (IFT-10, IFT-13c and IFT-14) using the GBI in planned intercept attempts failed in those attempts: 1) December 2002, the kill vehicle failed to deploy; 2) December 2004, the GBI launch aborted due to a software error in the interceptor; and 3) February 2005, the GBI did not launch due to problems with the test facility launch equipment. In the May 2007 flight test, the target missile second stage booster failed in flight, so the interceptor was not launched as planned. If one includes the September 2006 intercept (i.e., an intercept was not planned as a primary objective) it would give the current GMD program a record of three of six successful missile intercepts.

deployed in late 2004 in Alaska and California. Two planned intercept flight tests of the new configuration for December 2004 and February 2005 were not successful. After technical review, the interceptor successfully demonstrated a booster fly-out in 2005. In September 2006, a successful flight test exercise of the GMD element as deployed took place. Although a missile intercept was not planned as a primary objective of the data collection test, an intercept of a target warhead was achieved. Additional flight tests of the deployed element whose primary objectives are intercepts of long-range ballistic missile targets were originally scheduled for later in 2006, but were postponed. Then a May 2007 intercept test was scrubbed when the target missile failed to launch as planned; another attempt is scheduled for summer 2007. Because of this flight test record, some express doubts about the system's potential effectiveness and question whether additional deployment in Europe at this time should be pursued without additional, successful flight testing. Supporters counter that a significant number of non-flight tests and activities are conducted that demonstrate with high confidence the ability of the GMD element to perform its intended mission.³

What would the European element of the BMDS look like? The proposal is to deploy up to 10 Ground-based Interceptors (GBI) in silos at a former military base in Poland. It should be noted that the proposed GBI for the European GMD capability will not be identical to the GBI deployed now in Alaska and California. Although there is significant commonality of hardware, there are some differences. For example, the European GBI will consist of two rocket stages in contrast to the three-stage GBI deployed today.⁴ This particular 2-stage configuration has not been tested and is a basis for additional questions about the proposed system's effectiveness. Proponents of the system would argue that the 2-stage version is fundamentally the same as the 3-stage system, however.⁵ In Europe, the GBI reportedly will not need the third stage to achieve the range needed to intercept its intended target.⁶ This issue has raised the question for some observers of whether other U.S. systems designed for shorter or medium-range ballistic missile threats, such as Patriot, THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense), or Aegis (sea-based BMD) might be more appropriate for addressing the current and prospective Iranian ballistic missile threat to Europe. DOD's Missile Defense Agency (MDA) believes these systems would not be adequate to counter prospective Iranian ballistic missile threats.

³ The Administration maintains that since 2002 it has fielded a long-range BMD capability where none existed previously. Furthermore, the United States now has operationally capable upgraded early warning radars, command, control and battle management systems, Navy cruisers and destroyers capable of conducting long-range ballistic missile search and track missions, and about 20 GBI fielded in Alaska and California. This element of the BMDS was transitioned to alert in July 2006 when North Korea launched several ballistic missiles, including a long-range ballistic missile.

⁴ Boost Vehicle Plus. Report to Congress. March 1, 2007. Missile Defense Agency. For Official Use Only.

⁵ The Orbital Boost Vehicle 2 (OBV/2) is a modification of the existing, tested OBV/3 achieved by removing the 3rd stage from the existing missile.

⁶ More accurately, according to MDA, two stages provide the enhanced performance and burnout velocity required for the mission.

Deployment of the silos and interceptors in Poland is scheduled to begin in 2011 with completion in 2013. A final decision will take into consideration a detailed site and environmental analysis, as well as an overall security and support assessment. The field of the 10 interceptors itself is likely to comprise an area somewhat larger than a football field. The area of supporting infrastructure is likely to be similar to a small military installation. In addition, an American X-Band radar (a narrow-beam, midcourse tracking radar), currently being used in the Pacific missile test range, would be refurbished and transported to a fixed site at a military training base in the Czech Republic. The X-Band radar with its large, ball-shaped radome (radar dome) is several stories in height. A second, transportable forward acquisition radar would be deployed in a country to be determined, but closer to the Middle East. Some European press accounts have mentioned the Caucasus region, but the Administration has not publicly indicated where this radar might be located. Additionally, the proposed GMD European capability would include a communications network and support infrastructure (e.g., power generation, security and force protection systems, etc.) A few hundred U.S. personnel would be engaged in securing and operating both the interceptor and radar sites. The Administration intends for the United States to have full command authority over the system.

The FY2008 request is \$310.4 million for the proposed European GMD across several program elements of the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) budget. The total estimated GMD costs for the European site are \$4.04 billion (FY2007-FY2013), including Operation and Support costs through 2013. Although relatively small in U.S. defense budget terms, this year's request represents a significant commitment to the proposed European system.

Both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees asked for studies of alternatives to the Administration's proposed European GMD deployment (see section on congressional actions). Recently, some, such as Representative Tauscher, have suggested the Administration consider instead a combination of sea-based (Aegis SM-3) and land-based systems (PAC-3, THAAD). MDA Director Obering has argued that most of the current Aegis fleet would be required to defend Europe, and that the cost would be considerably greater than the current Bush proposal.⁷ Separately, the Center for Naval Analyses (a federally funded research center) is conducting an analysis of alternatives for the Navy's next big surface combatant ship.⁸ That review reportedly includes recommendations about future naval BMD requirements that might bear on any discussion of alternatives to the proposed European GMD plan.

The Location

In 2002 the Bush Administration began informal talks with Poland and the Czech Republic over the possibility of establishing missile defense facilities on their

⁷ See [<http://www.armscontrolwonk.com/1539/how-many-aegis-ships-to-defend-nato>] .

⁸ "U.S. May Build 25,000-ton Cruiser, Analysis of Alternatives Sees Nuclear BMD Vessel," *Defense News*, July 23, 2007, by Christopher P. Cavalas.

territory. Discussion of a more concrete plan — placing radar in the Czech Republic and interceptor launchers in Poland — was reported in the summer of 2006. The issue was increasingly debated in both countries. In January 2007, the U.S. government requested that formal negotiations begin. If agreements are struck, and if the Polish and Czech parliaments approve the projects, construction on the sites would likely begin in 2008, with initial deployments expected in 2011. The two governments have grappled with several issues as the debate has evolved.

Poland

Some analysts maintain that in Poland the notion of stationing American GMD facilities was more or less accepted early on in the discussions and that the main questions have revolved around what the United States might provide Warsaw in return. Some Poles believe their country should receive additional security guarantees in exchange for assuming a larger risk of being targeted by rogue state missiles because of the presence of the U.S. launchers on their soil. In addition, some Poles are concerned about Russia's response. The Polish government reportedly has been requesting that the United States provide batteries of Patriot missiles to shield Poland against short- and medium-range missiles.⁹

Any future base agreement will require the approval of the Polish parliament. As negotiations began, the leading opposition party had questions about the system — particularly the command and control aspects — and urged the government to ensure that it be integrated into a future NATO missile defense program. The former ruling party supported deployment of the missiles, but also called for greater transparency in the decision-making process. The smaller parties of the governing coalition expressed some skepticism, mainly for reasons of sovereignty, and indicated support for a public referendum.¹⁰ Polls in recent months have consistently indicated that a majority of Poles disapprove of a missile defense base being established in their country. Most objections were based upon concerns over sovereignty, as well as over the belief that the presence of the system would diminish rather than increase national security and might harm relations with neighboring states.

Czech Republic

In September 2002, the Czech defense minister, a member of the Social Democratic Party (CSSD), announced that he had “offered the United States the opportunity to deploy the missile defense system on Czech soil.”¹¹ In June 2006,

⁹ U.S. Missiles in Poland — Risks and Benefits. *Rzeczpospolita*. In: *BBC European Monitoring*. November 15, 2005. Sikorski Exit Is Bad For MD Bid. *Oxford Analytica*. February 8, 2007.

¹⁰ Polish Politician Weighs Up Pros and Cons Of US Radar Plan. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 5, 2007. In: *BBC Monitoring European*. February 6, 2007. See also: Don't Take Poland For Granted. Radek Sikorski [former Polish Defense Minister]. *Washington Post*. March 21, 2007.

¹¹ Czech Republic Seeks Joining Missile Defence Shield Project. *BBC*. September 17, (continued...)

inconclusive elections toppled the CSSD government and replaced it with a shaky coalition led by the center-right Civic Democratic Party (ODS). As with the outgoing government, the new one voiced support for GMD. However, the CSSD, now in opposition, began to backpedal on its support as polls showed increasing public skepticism, and by mid-2006 only the ODS was unambiguously backing deployment. When a relatively stable ODS-led government was finally formed in January 2007, the ODS apparently persuaded its coalition partners to support GMD (the Greens made agreement contingent upon NATO approval). In January 2007, it was announced that the United States had requested that official negotiations be started, and in March the Czech government formally agreed to launch talks.

Public opinion surveys have shown strong opposition to the plan among Czechs, who share many of their Polish neighbors' concerns. Some Czech officials believe that public opposition may be the result of a lack of knowledge about the program, and argue that the U.S. government has not provided sufficient information about the planned facilities. The CSSD is calling for a public referendum on the issue.¹² Any eventual agreement will have to be ratified by the parliament. Approval is not a foregone conclusion.

Policy Issues

U.S. proponents of the missile defense program note that the bases being planned would be part of a limited defensive system, not an offensive one. The missiles would not have explosive payloads, and would be launched only in the event that the United States or its friends or allies were under actual attack. Critics respond that Europe does not currently face a significant threat from Iran or its potential surrogates, but that Polish and Czech participation in the European GMD element would create such a threat. If American GMD facilities were installed, they argue, both countries would likely be targeted by terrorists, as well as by missiles from rogue states — and possibly from Russia — in the event of a future confrontation.

Debate in Poland and the Czech Republic

Some proponents of the proposed GMD European capability system assert that cooperation would help consolidate bilateral relations with the United States. In Poland in particular there is a sense, based in part on historical experience, that the United States is the only major ally that can be relied upon. Therefore, some Poles argue, it would be beneficial to strengthen the relationship by becoming an important U.S. partner through joining the missile defense system. In addition, some Czechs and Poles believe that the missile defense sites would become a prestigious symbol of the two countries' enhanced role in defending Europe. Some would argue that the

¹¹ (...continued)
2002.

¹² Paroubek Says U.S. Ambassador Told Him On His Govt Talks On Base. *CTK Daily News*. July 8, 2007.

Czechs and the Poles see this formal U.S. military presence as an ultimate security guarantee against Russia.

Opponents, however, contend that this is not a valid reason for accepting missile defense facilities because the two countries, which joined NATO in 1999, already enjoy a security guarantee through the alliance's mutual defense clause. Polish missile defense skeptics also maintain that their country does not need to improve its bilateral security relationship with the United States because it has already shown its loyalty through its significant contributions to the military operation in Iraq and the global war on terrorism. Some Polish and Czech political leaders reason that the United States will proceed with missile defense with or without them, so they may as well be on board. However, the missile bases are unpopular among the Czech and Polish public, and any government that agreed to host such facilities may lose political support. Some Czechs and Poles may be speculating whether it would be worthwhile to expend political capital on the GMD bases, as the issue may become moot. If GMD proponents are voted out of office in the United States and the project is discontinued, "Poland will become an international laughingstock."¹³ A Czech member of parliament noted that, if the U.S. Congress determines not to fund a European arm of missile defense, "[t]he USA will thus solve the problem for us."¹⁴

Some Czechs and Poles have argued that the extra-territorial status of the proposed bases would impinge upon national sovereignty. However, the Czech position is that the base "would be under the Czech Republic's jurisdiction."¹⁵ In addition, some have raised questions over command and control — who would decide when to push the launch button and what would the notification system be? Polish and Czech government leaders reportedly acknowledge that the time between the detection of the launch of a missile by a hostile regime and the need to fire off an interceptor would be so brief as to preclude government-to-government consultations.

Opponents have also cautioned that the interception of a nuclear-tipped missile over Polish or Czech territory could result in a rain of deadly debris. Supporters argue that an enemy missile would not be intercepted over Eastern Europe, and that even if it were, the tremendous kinetic energy of impact would cause both projectiles to be obliterated and any debris burnt upon atmospheric reentry. Skeptics note, however, that testing of these systems is never performed over populated areas.

¹³ Polish Daily: US Missile Defence in Poland Means 'Local Arms Race' With Belarus. *BBC Monitoring European*. November 18, 2005.

¹⁴ USA Wants To Deploy Missile Defence Radar On Czech Territory — Foreign Minister. *CTV* [Czech news agency]. In: *BBC Monitoring European*. November 29, 2006.

¹⁵ That Missile Debate of Ours. *Pravo*. September 9, 2006. In: *BBC Monitoring European*. September 12, 2006. Any US Missile Base On Czech Territory Subject To Czech Laws — Czech Ministry. *BBC Monitoring European*. August 18, 2006. State Security Council Okays US Radar. *Pravo*. In: *BBC European Monitoring*. January 26, 2006. Czech Premier Reminds Opposition Its Cabinet Started Talks On US Radar Base. *CTK Czech News Agency*. In: *BBC European Monitoring*. February 1, 2007.

European Response

The proposed U.S. system has encountered resistance in some European countries and beyond. Some critics claim that the program is another manifestation of American unilateralism and argue that, because of opposition by major European partners, Polish and Czech participation in the GMD program could damage those countries' relations with fellow EU members.¹⁶ Supporters, however, counter that the establishment of a missile defense system would protect Europe as well as the United States.

Some European leaders have asserted that the Bush Administration did not consult sufficiently with European allies or with Russia on its GMD plans. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier faulted the Bush Administration for failing to adequately discuss the proposal with affected countries. Former French President Chirac cautioned against the creation of "new divisions in Europe." Bush Administration officials, however, maintain that these arguments are disingenuous, as they have held wide-ranging discussions on GMD with European governments, and with Russia, both bilaterally and in the framework of the NATO-Russia Council.¹⁷ In addition, critics charge that establishing a European GMD base to counter Iranian missiles implies a tacit assumption on the part of the Bush Administration that diplomatic efforts to curb Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs are doomed to failure, and that Iran's future leaders will be undeterred by the prospect of nuclear annihilation.

Europeans also have raised questions about the technical feasibility of the program as well as its cost-effectiveness. According to a wire service report, "Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn called the U.S. [missile defense] plan an 'incomprehensible' waste of money"¹⁸

Other European leaders, however, including those of Denmark and Britain, have indicated that they support the missile defense project as a means to protect Europe from threats from rogue states. In addition, some European allies do not appear to be averse to the missile defense concept *per se*. Foreign Minister Steinmeier has indicated that Germany and other countries are interested in building a comparable system, but lack the technological know-how.¹⁹

¹⁶ Missile Shield: Poland's Security Better Served By Supporting Ukraine's Western Ambitions Than By Building Another Maginot Line. *Polish News Bulletin*. December 22, 2005.

¹⁷ Where Does Germany Stand? *Spiegel Online*. March 26, 2007. US Build Pressure On Europe Over Bases. *Financial Times*. February 21, 2007. France Calls For Dialogue on US Anti-Missile System. *Agence France Presse (AFP)*. February 21, 2007. U.S. Officials Brief On Missile Defense. February 23, 2007. U.S. Embassy Warsaw.

¹⁸ NATO Stepping Up Talks On Missile Defense Amid Concerns Over US Plans. AP. March 12, 2007.

¹⁹ Danish PM Supports US Anti-Missile Shield. *AFP*. March 7, 2007. Blair: We Need To Look At Missile Options. *Press Association National Newswire*. February 28, 2007.

(continued...)

NATO has also been deliberating strategic missile defenses. A feasibility study of such a program called for in the 2002 Prague Summit was completed in 2005. In the final communique of their 2006 Riga summit, NATO leaders declared the alliance study had concluded that long-range BMD is “technically feasible within the limitations and assumptions of the study,” and called for “continued work on the political and military implications of missile defence for the Alliance including an update on missile threat developments.” Supporters contend that the U.S. facilities currently under negotiation in Eastern Europe are intended to be a good fit — and therefore not inconsistent with — for part of any future NATO missile defense. However, other policymakers have recommended that the establishment of any anti-missile system in Europe should proceed solely under NATO auspices rather than on a bilateral basis with just two NATO partners. U.S. officials maintain that “the more NATO is involved in [GMD], the better.”²⁰

Some observers suggested that the Bush Administration chose not to work primarily through NATO because consensus agreement on the system was unlikely. However, in mid-June 2007, alliance defense ministers did agree to conduct a study of a complementary “bolt-on” anti-missile capability that would protect the southeastern part of alliance territory that would not be covered by the planned U.S. interceptors. American officials have interpreted the move as an implied endorsement of the U.S. GMD plan and an adaptation of NATO plans to fit the proposed U.S. system. In addition, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer stated “The roadmap on missile defense is now clear. ... It’s practical, and it’s agreed by all.”²¹

European opponents of the proposed U.S. plan also contend that statements by Russian officials are evidence that deployment of the U.S. system would damage Western relations with Russia. At a February 2007 security conference in Munich, President Putin strongly criticized GMD, maintaining that it would lead to “an inevitable arms race.” Russia has threatened to abrogate the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which eliminated this class of U.S. and then-Soviet missiles that were stationed in Europe. Putin also announced that Russia suspended compliance with the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty,²² and on another occasion indicated Russia might now target Poland and the Czech Republic and transfer medium-range ballistic missiles to the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad.

¹⁹ (...continued)

Europe Considers Missile Defense System: German Minister. *AFP*. February 19, 2007.

²⁰ This program should be distinguished from the theater missile defense system intended to protect deployed forces, which the alliance has already approved. See Riga Summit Declaration. NATO web page. [<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2006/p06-150e.htm>] Missile Defense and Europe. *Foreign Press Briefing*. U.S. Department of State. March 28, 2007.

²¹ NATO Considers Missile Defenses For Southeastern Flank In Tandem With U.S. Shield. *Associated Press*. June 14, 2007. U.S. Wins NATO Backing On Missile Defense. *New York Times*. June 15, 2007.

²² See CRS Report RL33865, *Arms Control and Nonproliferation: A Catalog of Treaties and Agreements*, by Amy F. Woolf, Steve Bowman and Sharon Squassoni, section on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty. NATO “Very Concerned” At Russia Treaty Pullout. *Reuters*. July 16, 2007.

Some U.S. and European officials have dismissed Russian alleged concerns and have noted that Moscow has known of this plan for years and has even been invited to participate.²³ GMD proponents maintain that the interceptors are intended to take out launched Iranian missiles aimed at European or American targets and could not possibly act as a deterrent against Russia, which has hundreds of missiles and thousands of warheads. The chief of the Czech general staff has noted that “by simple arithmetic, Russian generals can see that U.S. missile defenses cannot imperil Moscow’s arsenal.” Some Russians contend, however, that the modest GMD facilities planned for Eastern Europe are likely just the harbinger of a more ambitious program.

Russian officials have also argued that North Korean or Iranian missiles would not likely enter European airspace, and that the real reason for GMD is to emplace U.S. radar in eastern Europe to monitor Russian missile sites and naval operations. A Czech military officer dismissed the charge of electronic espionage as “absolute nonsense,” arguing that “the radar monitors the already launched missiles, and it cannot monitor what is going on on the ground” — a task that is already being performed by U.S. surveillance satellites.²⁴

Some argue that Russia has other motives for raising alarms about the U.S. missile defense system: to foment discord among NATO member states, and to draw attention away from Russia’s suppression of dissent and its nuclear technology cooperation with Iran. Observers note that Russia blustered about NATO expansion, too, and argue that Russia’s veiled threats may actually stiffen resolve in Prague and Warsaw. Some observers note, however, that Russian acceptance of NATO expansion was conditioned on a tacit understanding that NATO or U.S. military expansion into the new member states would not occur. The European GMD in this regard is seen as unacceptable to Russia.

On June 7, in a surprise move during the G-8 meeting in Germany, Putin offered to partner with the United States on missile defense, and suggested that a Soviet-era radar facility in Azerbaijan be used to help track and target hostile missiles that might be launched from the Middle East. President Bush responded by calling the proposal an “interesting suggestion,” and welcomed the apparent policy shift. The following day, Putin suggested that GMD interceptors be “placed in the south, in U.S. NATO allies such as Turkey, or even Iraq ... [or] on sea platforms.” Military and political representatives from both countries have been meeting to discuss the proposal, but some experts point out that Azerbaijan is technically not the ideal place to locate the radar because it would be too close to potential Iranian launch sites; they also argue that the radar is outmoded.

In the meantime, Putin urged the United States not to deploy elements of GMD until his offer had been examined. One week later, however, U.S. Defense Secretary

²³ Russia Sees Threat From US Plan For Missiles In Eastern Europe. *AFP*. January 22, 2007. Poland Government Leaders Meet On U.S. Missile Defense Proposal. *Associated Press*. February 12, 2007.

²⁴ U.S. Radar Not To Threaten Russia, China - Czech Chief Of Staff. *CTK Daily News*. January 25, 2007.

Robert Gates stated that even if the United States were to accept Russia's offer to share use of the Azeri radar, that facility would be regarded as "an additional capability" to complement the proposed GMD sites planned for Europe.²⁵ In late July 2007, MDA Director Obering said the United States is looking at the proposal very seriously. He said the Azeri radar could be useful for early detection of missile launches, but that it does not have the tracking ability to guide an interceptor missile to a target — which the proposed Czech radar would be able to do, he said.

At a July 1-2 meeting in Kennebunkport, Maine, Putin expanded on his counterproposal by recommending that missile defense be coordinated through offices in Brussels and Moscow. He also suggested the possible use of radar in south Russia and said that cooperation could be expanded to other European countries through the use of the NATO-Russia council — eliminating, he added, the need for facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic. President Bush responded positively to Putin's new proposal, but insisted on the need for the Eastern European sites.²⁶

Whatever the final result, some observers believe that the recent exchanges between Bush and Putin have served to reduce tensions. The exchange between the two leaders already appears to have defused tensions somewhat, however. Russian cooperation in missile defense could remove a significant impediment to the program and could dampen criticism by European and other leaders. It also may have opened the door to a more favorable attitude by NATO toward missile defense.

Congressional Actions

Congress has been examining the European basing proposal. In its report on the FY2008 defense authorization bill, the House Armed Services Committee cited its concern from last year (FY2007) that investment in the European BMD site was premature.²⁷ In part, the Committee's concerns focus on the need to complete scheduled integrated end-to-end testing of the system now deployed in Alaska and California. Additionally, the Committee notes its reluctance to fund the European site without formal agreements with Poland and the Czech Republic and without knowing the terms under which the estimated \$4 billion program costs would be expended. Therefore, the Committee recommended that no funds be approved for FY2008 for construction of the European GMD site.²⁸ The Committee did, however,

²⁵ Putin Wants Quick Answer On Alternative Antimissile Site. *RFE/RL Newswire*. June 11, 2007. Putin Surprises Bush With Plan On Missile Shield. *New York Times*. June 8, 2007. US Says Russia Offer Cannot Replace Missile Shield. *Reuters*. June 14, 2007.

²⁶ Putin Expands On His Missile Defense Plan. *New York Times*. July 3, 2007/ Putin Proposes Broader Cooperation On Missile Defense. *Washington Post*. July 3, 2007.

²⁷ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008. Report of the House Armed Services Committee on H.R. 1585, May 11, 2007. House of Representatives. 110th Congress, 1st Session. H.Rept. 110-146, pp. 238-240.

²⁸ To preserve the opportunity to move forward with the research and development components of the European interceptor and radar site, the Committee recommended that
(continued...)

recommend \$42.7 million to continue procurement of ten additional GMD interceptors that could be deployed to the European site or for expanded inventory at the GMD site in Alaska (as noted in MDA budget documents). Also, the Committee expressed concern over the testing plan and risk reduction strategy for the proposed two-stage GMD interceptor for Europe. The Committee further directed that two studies be done: 1) the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State are to submit a report to Congress by January 31, 2008, to include how the Administration will obtain NATO's support for the European GMD proposal, and how other missile defense capabilities such as Aegis and THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) could contribute to the missile defense protection of Europe; and 2) an independent assessment of European missile defense options should be done in a timely manner.

In the Senate defense authorization bill, the Armed Services Committee recommended limiting the availability of funding for the European GMD site until two conditions have been met: 1) completion of bilateral agreements with Poland and the Czech Republic; and 2) 45 days have elapsed following the receipt by Congress of a report from an FFRDC (federally funded research and development center) to conduct an independent assessment of options for missile defense of Europe.²⁹ The Committee recommends a reduction of \$85 million for site activation and construction activities for the proposed European GMD deployment. The Committee also limits funding for acquisition or deployment of interceptor missiles for the European system until the Secretary of Defense certifies to Congress that the proposed interceptor to be deployed has demonstrated, through successful, operationally realistic flight testing, that it has a high probability of working in an operationally effective manner. The Committee notes that the proposed 2-stage version of the interceptor has not been developed and is not scheduled to be tested until 2010.³⁰ Therefore, the Committee notes, it could be several years before it is known if the proposed interceptor will work in an operationally effective manner. The Committee indicates that it would not limit site surveys, studies, analysis, planning and design for the proposed European GMD site, but that construction and deployment could not take place prior to ratification of formal bilateral agreements, which MDA estimates would not take place before 2009. Finally, the Committee notes there are a number of near-term missile defense options to provide defense of Europe against short-range, medium-range and future intermediate-range ballistic missiles, such as the Patriot PAC-3, the Aegis BMD system, and THAAD.

In floor debate, the Senate approved an amendment by Senator Sessions (90-5) to the defense authorization bill stating that the policy of the United States is to

²⁸ (...continued)

\$150 million for FY2008 be available. Upon completion of bilateral agreements and if further engagement with NATO on the proposed site can be demonstrated, the Committee notes that the Department of Defense has the option of submitting a reprogramming request to Congress in FY2008 to fund site preparation activities.

²⁹ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008. Report of the Senate Armed Services Committee on S. 1547, June 5, 2007. Committee on Armed Services. U.S. Senate. 110th Congress, 1st Session. Report 110-77, pp. 140-142.

³⁰ See footnote 5.

develop and deploy an effective defense system against the threat of an Iranian nuclear missile attack against the United States and its European allies. Further debate and passage of the defense authorization bill was postponed by the Majority Leader after debate over the Iraq war. Most observers expect that the bill will be taken up again sometime in September.