

Clinton confirms plans for missile base in Poland

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"As was announced by our two presidents in December, we plan to establish a new permanent U.S. air detachment in Poland, build missile defenses in Poland, and as agreed at the NATO summit, develop a contingency plan in the region," Clinton told journalists ahead of talks with Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski in Washington.

Wikileaks published U.S. cables in late 2010 showing that NATO was drawing up a plan on the protection of Estonia, Lithuania and Poland from external threats on a request from the United States and Germany.

The Guardian reported that under the plan, reportedly approved by Clinton, the United States, Britain, Germany and Poland would deploy troops in the region in case of a military aggression against the Baltic States or Poland itself.

According to the British newspaper, NATO members approved the draft plan during the alliance's summit in Lisbon in November 2010.

In 2009, the United States decided to deploy several F-16 fighter jets and Hercules transport aircraft in Poland. Polish Defense Minister Bogdan Klich has said the United States was also planning to deploy Patriot missile defense systems in Poland at a base just 100 kilometers from the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad.

"We have a full agenda that will concentrate on three essential areas: building our mutual security, expanding prosperity and promoting democracy," Clinton said on Thursday, adding "as we grow our military partnership, we continue to expand economic ties between the Polish and American people."

Moscow has long opposed the deployment of U.S. missile defenses near its borders, arguing they would be a security threat and could destroy the strategic balance of forces in Europe.

The United States scrapped earlier plans in September last year for an anti-ballistic-missile

defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland. Moscow welcomed the move, and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said later that Russia would drop plans to deploy Iskander-M tactical missiles in its Kaliningrad Region, which borders NATO members Poland and Lithuania.

Russia and NATO agreed to cooperate on the so called Euro missile defense system at the Lisbon summit. NATO insists there should be two independent systems that exchange information, while Russia favors a joint system.

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