

## Czechs Protest US Missile Plan

Protesters: "We do not want US occupiers and their radar"

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, May 26, 2007

Alalam 26 May 2007

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Hundreds of banner waving Czechs demonstrated in the center of Prague on Saturday against US plans to site a tracking radar in the country as part of its extended anti-missile shield.

Organizers of the "No base" demonstration said around 2,000 people took part in the protest against the proposed base, backed by the center-right government of Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek.

Police put the figure nearer to 1,000.

"No American base in the Czech Republic," "We do not want US occupiers and their radar," "Put the radar at the castle," (the official seat of the Czech president), read some of the banners.

"Only this US radar is welcome in the Czech Republic," read the text of one leaflet below a picture of Radar, the US television "MASH" hero.

"We are fighting a David and Goliath battle," declared one of the demonstration's organizers, Jan Tamas, after denouncing the government's decision not to call a nationwide referendum on hosting the US base.

"After a year we can see that the government ignores public opinion and all arguments against the base.

"We must call for their dismissal," Tamas said, prompting chants of "dismiss, dismiss," from the crowd.

"We want a national referendum, before we reply to the US request," said the mayor of Jince, Josef Hala, the site around 60 kilometers (40 miles) from Prague earmarked by US military experts for the radar.

Several hundred people from the towns and villages nearby were bussed into Prague to take part in the protest, organizers said.

"We will not give up. We will do what we have to until the last," 60-year-old Stana Braunerová, from Brdy, around 10 kilometers (six miles) from the radar site, told AFP.

Another demonstration has been scheduled for June 4, when President George W. Bush is expected to begin a visit to Prague ahead of the G8 summit.

Premier Topolanek on Saturday repeated his support for the radar, which together with 10 interceptor missiles in neighboring Poland, is aimed at defending against rocket attacks from other states.

Siting a base forms part of the country's development following the 1991 withdrawal of the last Russian troops, Topolanek argued.

"We should be active elements in political security," he added at a news conference following a meeting of party leaders.

Topolanek said that lower house lawmakers were unlikely to vote on the US radar until early next year which should give the government plenty of time to make its case to a skeptical public.

Polls have shown around two-thirds of Czechs opposed to the US radar.

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