

Europe And Beyond: U.S. Consolidates Global Missile Shield

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On September 17, 2009 U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and President Barack Obama separately announced plans to shift the emphasis of the global American interceptor missile – so-called missile shield or anti-ballistic missile defense – project from the previous George W. Bush administration’s plans to a more mobile, flexible and geographically broader system. [1]

The proposed deployments of ten ground-based interceptor missiles in Poland and a forward-based X-band radar installation in the Czech Republic were abandoned in favor of what Obama deemed “stronger, smarter and swifter defenses of American forces and America’s allies.” Both Poland and the Czech Republic, however, remain part of Pentagon plans and will be incorporated into a broader grid with all 28 members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which in its final stage will cover all of Europe. Or at least the entire continent west of Russia and Belarus.

Plans for ground-based interceptors in Poland alarmed Russia, which necessarily saw them as aimed at itself, but would also have been housed in fixed silos that made them easy targets.

In the month before the announced change in American plans to begin the incremental buildup of a missile shield in Eastern Europe – phased adaptive approach in government terms – a report surfaced at the annual U.S. Space and Missile Defense Conference of the Boeing Company planning a 47,500-pound mobile interceptor missile launcher to be deployed within 24 hours to NATO bases in Europe. [2] During the same month the Missile Defense Agency and Boeing also announced the successful test of their joint Airborne Laser (ABL) anti-missile system [3].

At the end of last August the first disclosure appeared of plans to expand U.S. interceptor missile deployments to the Balkans and the Black Sea region, Israel and Turkey. [4] The head of the Missile Defense Agency, Lieutenant General Patrick O’Reilly, said at the time that he supported the installation of Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) interceptors in the Balkans and Turkey. (In 2007 his predecessor, Lieutenant General Henry Obering, mentioned placing U.S. interceptor missile radar sites in the Caucasus and even Ukraine.)

The SM-3 is a ship-based anti-ballistic missile and anti-satellite interceptor – used to destroy an American satellite in orbit over the Pacific Ocean in February of 2008 – and part of the U.S. and allied Aegis ballistic missile defense system. It has the main advantage of being deployable around the world on destroyers and cruisers. What O’Reilly was referring to, though, was a combination of sea-based SM-3s and their adaptation for use on land.

In describing current U.S. missile shield plans last September, Pentagon chief Gates spoke of a four-phase program that began with the deployment of Aegis class warships equipped with SM-3s in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea last year, to be followed by enhanced versions of the missile both on sea and land, with successive generations of more advanced models in the third and fourth stage.

This February plans to station land-based SM-3s in Bulgaria and Romania were announced [5], and when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski in the latter's nation early last month to sign an amended agreement on interceptor missile cooperation, it was revealed that SM-3s will be stationed in Poland in the second phase of the Pentagon's plan for a continent-wide interceptor system. [6] Slightly more than a month before, the U.S. moved Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) interceptors and approximately 100 troops into eastern Poland, only a few kilometers from Russia's Kaliningrad exclave. [7] U.S. deployments in the country are also part of a broader NATO strategy. [8]

Connecting the ship- and land-based components of the global U.S. missile shield in Eastern Europe with other locations to the east and the south, the Pentagon has also been qualitatively expanding Patriot Advanced Capability-3 and Standard Missile-3 deployments in the Persian Gulf. Washington is now preparing to provide Gulf Arab states with the longer-range Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile intercept system. [9]

Last October and November the U.S. and Israel conducted the fourteen-day Juniper Cobra 10 exercise with five missile interception systems, the largest such live-fire maneuvers ever held. An American military officer present at the war games said the unparalleled drills would "help the development of a planned NATO missile shield for Europe." [10] A year before, the U.S. deployed an X-band missile shield radar (Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance) to Israel with 120 troops, the first and to date only long-term foreign troop deployment in Israel's history.

Washington and NATO are well advanced in solidifying an impenetrable interceptor missile system from the Baltic Sea to the Arabian Sea and the Black Sea to the Red Sea.

In the past few days further details have emerged concerning the expansion of those plans in both breadth and sophistication.

On August 30 Czech Prime Minister Petr Necas announced that "his government has been negotiating a plan with the United States to place a warning center in the Czech Republic as part of a reworked U.S. missile defense plan." He also stated that personnel manning the facility could be provided by the U.S. and other NATO states and that the site could even be based in his nation's capital, Prague. Necas added, "The U.S. plans to initially invest \$2 million in 2011 and 2012 for the center, which is expected to become part of a joint NATO missile defense shield in the future," [11] and that no new treaty with Washington would be required for the project. Czech popular opposition to the earlier plan for an X-band missile defense installation was credited for the U.S. discarding the Bush-era plan.

Two days afterward Czech Defense Minister Alexandr Vondra confirmed that the U.S. had allotted \$2 million for the construction of the facility, that American experts would be deployed there and that it would be in operation by the middle of next year. Vondra added, "I believe it will be one of many parts of the NATO system...." [12]

In August of last year the Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza revealed that the U.S. would expand its interceptor missile plans to the Balkans, Israel and Turkey. This August the Washington Post belatedly confirmed that design.

An article by staff writer Craig Whitlock appeared in the August 1 Sunday edition of the newspaper which quoted several U.S. military officials to the effect that:

“The U.S. military is on the verge of activating a partial missile shield over southern Europe....

“Pentagon officials said they are nearing a deal to establish a key radar ground station, probably in Turkey or Bulgaria. Installation of the high-powered X-band radar would enable the first phase of the shield to become operational next year.

“At the same time, the U.S. military is working with Israel and allies in the Persian Gulf to build and upgrade their missile defense capabilities. The United States installed a radar ground station in Israel in 2008 and is looking to place another in an Arab country in the gulf region.”

Not substituting for deployments in Poland and the Czech Republic, as has been seen above, but adapting and extending the network of which they are a part southward and eastward.

The Washington Post feature added that although the interceptor missile projects in Eastern Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf are technically distinct, “they are all designed to plug into command-and-control systems operated by, or with, the U.S. military. The Israeli radar, for example, is operated by U.S. personnel and is already functional, feeding information to U.S. Navy ships operating in the Mediterranean.”

Providing historical perspective and dispelling the prevalent notion that the current administration’s plans are in any manner a retreat from those of its predecessor, the piece stated:

“The concept of a missile shield began with former president Ronald Reagan, who first described his vision of a defense against a Soviet nuclear attack in his ‘Star Wars’ speech in 1983....It has expanded further under President Obama, despite the skepticism he expressed during the 2008 campaign about the feasibility and affordability of Bush’s plan for a shield in Europe.

“In September, Obama announced that he was changing Bush’s approach. Instead of abandoning the idea, he directed the Pentagon to construct a far more extensive and flexible missile defense system in Europe that will be built in phases between now and 2020.” [13]

The author provided these additional details:

Starting late last year the U.S. has steadily deployed Aegis class warships in the Mediterranean Sea equipped with Spy-1 360 degree missile radar and “arsenals of Standard Missile-3 interceptors [which] will form the backbone of Obama’s shield in Europe.”

The initial detachments, one or two destroyers and cruisers at a time, will be tripled in number. Furthermore, “the Obama administration has plans to nearly double its number of

Aegis ships with ballistic missile defenses, to 38 by 2015.”

Citing the commander of the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, Vice Admiral Henry B. Harris Jr., the Washington Post article stated that one “option would be to assign some Aegis ships to home ports in Europe instead of making them sail constantly back and forth to the United States.

“Other Navy officials have floated the idea of flying in fresh crews so a ship could more or less deploy continuously, obviating the need for long breaks.”

It then supplied further specifics, disclosing that “Aegis ships, armed with dozens of SM-3 missile interceptors, will patrol the Mediterranean and Black seas and link up with...high-power radar planned for southern Europe.”

Romania will host land-based Standard Missile-3 deployments and Poland will follow as the site of SM-3s and additional sensors.

Although as recently as last year the Pentagon envisioned a total of 147 SM-3s, the Obama administration intends to nearly triple that number to 436. The new strategy “will require an unspecified number of new SM-3 missiles, which cost between \$10 million and \$15 million apiece.”

The system will expand in earnest after the NATO summit in Portugal in November, when the U.S.’s 27 members in the military bloc are expected to endorse a comprehensive, layered, mobile interceptor missile system for the entire European continent, albeit still firmly under U.S. control.

The Missile Defense Agency’s O’Reilly “said combined defenses would feature the best of both worlds: an ‘upper layer’ framework of SM-3 and Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, interceptors, operated by the United States, that could shoot down enemy missiles in space or the upper atmosphere; and a ‘lower layer’ of Patriot batteries, operated by European allies, providing a second layer of defense closer to the ground.” [14]

Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missiles have a longer range than both the PAC-3 and SM-3 and had not been discussed before as part of the new system.

Regarding the placement of U.S. and NATO interceptor missiles in Romania, on the Black Sea across from southwestern Russia, a recent analysis examined the geopolitical consequences:

“This means that the U.S. front line of defense is shifting from the eastern border of Germany to the Black Sea, which is adjacent to the Middle East, the Caucasus and Russia.

“Romania is ready to accept deployment of 20 SM-3 anti-ballistic missile units, currently installed on American naval vessels with the Aegis Combat System. These missiles could later be replaced with the more advanced terminal high altitude area defense (THAAD) missiles. They will also be deployed in Bulgaria. Meanwhile, it has become more likely that the X-band radar system, which the U.S. originally planned to install in the Czech Republic, will be set up in Israel.” [15]

Bulgarian Defense Minister Anyu Angelov was summoned to Washington for six days starting in late June for “the launch of technical negotiations about NATO’s missile defence

in Europe in general” [16] and meetings with Defense Secretary Gates, Air Force Secretary Michael Donley and Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs Ellen Tauscher, the last-named the key point person in securing U.S. missile shield deployments in Eastern Europe.

Angelov was given his marching orders and returned home to confirm that his nation will join the U.S. interceptor missile program in Europe (and beyond) and that “Bulgaria is participating actively in the discussions and the practical realization of all steps concerning the establishment of a NATO-wide missile defense system.” [17]

For domestic consumption he presented the decision as his country’s own – “We are the most interested state in Europe in the establishment of a missile shield because we are in the most threatened region – we fall within the range of ballistic missiles, medium-range ballistic missiles [such] as the ones employed by the states in the wider Middle East” – but since Bulgaria was incorporated into NATO in 2004 it now receives orders from the White House, the State Department and the Pentagon.

In a recent report that 700 Bulgarian combat troops have been ordered to Afghanistan (as Dutch troops have left), a leading local news agency demonstrated how such decisions are made: “Bulgaria’s center-right government, elected last July, initially said it would not be able to provide more forces in Afghanistan due to the economic crisis, but later changed its strategy under pressure from the United States and NATO.” [18]

The same relationship of supremacy and subordination obtains between the U.S. and all other NATO members, particularly the twelve new acquisitions in Eastern Europe from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic Sea.

The Pentagon has secured seven new military bases in Bulgaria and Romania since the latter two states joined NATO in 2004. Those sites include the Bezmer Air Base in Bulgaria, fifty kilometers from the Black Sea, and the Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base in Romania near the city of Constanta on the Black Sea. Both are being upgraded to strategic air bases which, already employed for the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, are available for strikes against Iran and in the South Caucasus in the event of an equivalent of the Georgian-Russian war of two years ago. The Romanian base is the main headquarters for the Pentagon’s Joint Task Force-East.

At any given time there are several thousand U.S. troops in Bulgaria and Romania, the first foreign forces in Bulgaria since shortly after the end of World War Two and in Romania since 1962.

A comparable situation exists in Poland. An American military newspaper recently ran a feature on the deployment of Patriot missile batteries in the country called “U.S. Army’s presence in Poland most significant since World War II” in which an American Army spokesman stated, “We have between 80 and 150 troops going there on a regular basis. We’ve never had that number and for that long of a period.” No foreign troops had been stationed in Poland since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991.

The article also stated that “For the first time since the end of World War II, U.S. Army soldiers are making regular rotations into Poland, this time to train its forces to use Patriot missiles.

“Forty miles from the Russian border, a small group of U.S. Army Europe soldiers is instructing the Polish military about the missiles, which are designed to counter tactical ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and advanced aircraft.” [19]

A Fox News report characterized the operation as “the first long-term U.S. troop presence...in Poland,” and quoted U.S. ambassador to the nation Lee Feinstein as maintaining “It’s U.S. boots on the ground, a very tangible symbol of the U.S.-Polish alliance.” [20]

Regarding Israel, where the U.S. has also deployed the first foreign troops on that country’s soil, in late July the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense added \$95.7 million to a White House funding request for Tel Aviv’s long-range Arrow and medium-range David’s Sling anti-ballistic missile programs subsumed under the Iron Dome layered air and missile defense system. Abiding by the subcommittee’s recommendations, Congress will allot \$422.7 million for the above purpose for next year (with \$109 million for the Arrow 3 system), bringing total U.S. underwriting of Israeli interceptor missile programs to \$1 billion over the past four years.

According to member of the subcommittee Congressman Steve Rothman, “Given the concern and attention that we are focusing now on every dollar we are expending on behalf of the US taxpayer for all purposes, including the defense of the United States and its allies, it is a mark of the importance of these projects that they were all funded so robustly and fully by our subcommittee.” [21]

By absorbing most all of Eastern Europe into NATO, the U.S. has also provided its Israeli ally access to air bases and training sites of strategic significance for future attacks on neighboring Middle East nations. On July 29 Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Matan Vilna’i stated, “We fly in Romania so we can act deep inside neighboring Arab states.” [22]

The more extended and flexible, the “stronger, smarter and swifter” U.S. missile strategy, then, pursues a trajectory from the Baltic Sea, with Standard Missile-3-equipped Aegis warships also available for service in the Norwegian and Barents Seas, to Southeastern Europe into the South Caucasus, Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea and Persian Gulf, covering Russia’s western and southern flanks and encroaching upon Iran.

When President Obama visits India in November he intends to secure billions of dollars in arms deals with the world’s second most populous nation.

On July 12 Russia’s Vzglyad newspaper reported that “The deal, if signed during Obama’s visit, would [have] the US replace Russia as India’s biggest arms supplier...adding that the deal would also help India curb China’s rise.

“India’s shortlist includes Patriot defense systems, Boeing mid-air refueling tankers and certain types of howitzers, and the total cost of the deal may exceed \$10 billion....” [23].

By selling anti-ballistic missile systems to India – starting with Patriots and advancing to longer-range models – Washington will connect its missile interception network from Europe through the Middle East to its eastern wing, that which includes 26 ground-based interceptors at Fort Greely in Alaska, a 280-foot-tall, 50,000-pound sea-based X-band radar in the Aleutian Islands, and PAC-3, SM-3 and THAAD missiles in Japan, South Korea and Australia.

Current U.S.-China tensions, the worst in several decades, were triggered early this year when Washington confirmed it was providing Taiwan with 200 advanced Patriot missiles and warships capable of being upgraded for the Aegis Combat System. [24]

For all the talk of protecting the U.S. Mainland from alleged Iranian and North Korean missile threats – accusations that are in the first case absurd and in the second highly improbable – at the end of the day Washington and its military allies around the world are well on the way to encircling Russia, China and Iran with an insurmountable barrier of interceptor missile deployments in conjunction with the militarization of space and the Prompt Global Strike program. Neither those three nations nor any other outside the rapidly expanding U.S. global military nexus will be permitted to retain effective deterrence or retaliation capabilities.

Notes

1) U.S. Missile Shield Plans: Retreat Or Advance?

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/09/18/u-s-missile-shield-plans-retreat-or-advance>

U.S. Missile Shield System Deployments: Larger, Sooner, Broader

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/09/27/u-s-missile-shield-system-deployments-larger-sooner-broader>

2) Pentagon Intensifies Plans For Global Military Supremacy: U.S., NATO Could Deploy Mobile Missiles Launchers To Europe

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/09/02/pentagon-intensifies-plans-for-global-military-supremacy-u-s-nato-could-deploy-mobile-missiles-launchers-to-europe>

3) U.S. Accelerates First Strike Global Missile Shield System

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/09/02/u-s-accelerates-first-strike-global-missile-shield-system/>

4) U.S. Expands Global Missile Shield Into Middle East, Balkans

September 11, 2009

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/09/11/u-s-expands-global-missile-shield-into-middle-east-balkans>

5) Romania: U.S. Expands Missile Shield Into Black Sea

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2010/02/06/romania-u-s-expands-missile-shield-into-black-sea>

6) Clinton Renews U.S. Claims On Former Soviet Space

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2010/07/07/clinton-renews-u-s-claims-on-former-soviet-space>

7) Poland: U.S. Moves First Missiles, Troops Near Russian Border

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2010/05/29/poland-u-s-moves-first-missiles-troops-near-russian-border>

8) Rasmussen In Poland: Expeditionary NATO, Missile Shield And Nuclear Weapons

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2010/03/14/rasmussen-in-poland-expeditionary-nato-missile-shield-nuclear-weapons>

9) U.S. Extends Missile Buildup From Poland And Taiwan To Persian Gulf

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2010/02/03/u-s-extends-missile-buildup-from-poland-and-taiwan-to-persian-gulf>

10) Israel: Forging NATO Missile Shield, Rehearsing War With Iran

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/11/05/israel-forging-nato-missile-shield-rehearsing-war-with-iran>

11) Associated Press, July 30, 2010

12) Czech News Agency, August 1, 2010

13) Washington Post, August 1, 2010

14) Ibid

15) Japan Times/Sentaku Magazine, July 26, 2010

Black Sea, Caucasus: U.S. Moves Missile Shield South And East

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/09/19/283/>

16) Sofia News Agency, June 29, 2010

17) Sofia News Agency, July 9, 2010

18) Sofia News Agency, July 30, 2010

19) Stars and Stripes, July 23, 2010

20) Fox News, July 13, 2010

21) Jerusalem Post, August 1, 2010

22) Jerusalem Post, July 30, 2010

23) Global Times, July 13, 2010

24) U.S.-China Military Tensions Grow

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2010/01/20/u-s-china-military-tensions-grow>

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