

## Poland sees merit in new Obama missile plan: aide

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“If this system becomes reality in the shape Washington is now suggesting, it would actually be better for us than the original missile shield programme,” said Slawomir Nowak, a senior advisor to Prime Minister Donald Tusk. “We were never really threatened by a long-range missile attack from Iran.” -Polish officials say Washington may ask Poland eventually to host SM-3 interceptors targeting short and medium-range missiles as part of the new land-based system....“We are familiar with the SM-3 system and the Americans have assured us Poland is one of the countries where they want to place this system.”

Warsaw — Poland’s security interests may end up being better served under the flexible defense system now proposed by Washington than it was under the previous land-based plan, an adviser to the Polish prime minister said on Thursday.

Last week, U.S. President Barack Obama shelved a project to install interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar site in the Czech Republic and said he would instead seek a system involving first sea-based and later land-based interceptors.

The key concern for NATO member Poland has been not so much the kind of missile system deployed as the implicit U.S. commitment to its defense implied by the stationing of American military hardware on its soil.

“If this system becomes reality in the shape Washington is now suggesting, it would actually be better for us than the original missile shield programme,” said Slawomir Nowak, a senior advisor to Prime Minister Donald Tusk.

“We were never really threatened by a long-range missile attack from Iran,” he told TVP INFO television.

The Bush administration first proposed the “missile shield” to address concerns Iran was trying to develop nuclear warheads it could mount on long-range missiles. U.S. intelligence now believes Iran is unlikely to have a long-range capability until between 2015 and 2020.

Russia strongly opposed the shield, especially its planned location in eastern Europe near to its borders, and has warmly welcomed Obama’s decision.

Polish officials say Washington may ask Poland eventually to host SM-3 interceptors targeting short and medium-range missiles as part of the new land-based system.

“Firstly, we have to learn what exactly is the new proposal the United States is willing to offer to us,” said Nowak.

“We are familiar with the SM-3 system and the Americans have assured us Poland is one of

the countries where they want to place this system.”

Under the new plan, Washington would deploy Aegis-equipped ships first with interceptors capable of shooting down ballistic missiles to defend both U.S. forces and European allies.

The land-based systems would be fielded in a second phase starting in about 2015. \*

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