

“Reset” in US Russian Relations and “Missile Defence”

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There was cause for much optimism when President Obama made the first steps towards a ‘reset’ in US-Russian relations by renouncing plans by his predecessor, George Bush, to deploy American missiles in close proximity to the Russian borders on the territory of Poland and the Czech Republic.

And it cleared the way for settling other important problems in bilateral relations. Preparations for signing a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty got off the ground at last, and the no-easy talks on the treaty eventually resulted in an agreement which was signed by Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama in Prague in May this year.

But as it became clear shortly afterward, the issue is far from simple. At the end of September Bucharest said it was getting ready to sign an agreement on the deployment of an American military base on the territory of Rumania. A similar base was to be deployed on the territory of Bulgaria. As it happens, Rumania will have the bases instead of Poland, and Bulgaria instead of the Czech Republic. But a change of location makes no difference as far as the end result is concerned. Given the situation, the American moves cause as much concern as before.

As he commented on them, Russia’s Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said: “Russia and the US have discussed the issue of missile defense at length and agreed that there would be no anti-missiles in Poland or the Czech Republic. And all of a sudden, we learn that the missiles are being moved to other European countries. So where is the ‘reset’?”

Among other questions which are brought up in connection with the missile defense program is how long the United States is going to drag its feet over ratifying the new START Treaty. Signed in May, the treaty was supposed to be ratified by the Senate by the middle of September. Now, as the first ten days of October are coming to a close, the opponents to the treaty are preventing the ratification from going ahead by linking it to missile defense. Senator Richard Lugar said a few days ago that the treaty should be supplemented with a special resolution stating that it imposes no restrictions on American plans to develop a missile defense system.

Mighty circles in the US have been doggedly pursuing a missile defense program ever since it was launched by President Ronald Reagan 25 years ago. And the intensity with which they are doing so stays unabated, despite substantial failures and losses. One the latest failures, which cost the US 120 million dollars, was reported recently, when an interceptor missile launched from an air base in Vandenberg, California, failed to hit a hypothetical target and exploded in mid-air.

Professor Richard Garwin, one of the founders of America's hydrogen bomb, indicated as he spoke in the Senate recently that the American missile defense system in its current shape was useless.

Auditors from a Washington-based audit agency came to an equally disappointing conclusion. They had to admit that missile defense experts had failed to achieve the results they were paid for and that a system they had built was totally ineffective.

The sums allocated for the missile defense program were huge beyond description. Experts estimate that one trillion dollars has been spent on it by now and it will require billions more if continued.

This explains why the masterminds of American missile defense have been persevering in pursuing it regardless of common sense. Billions of dollars earmarked for missile defense have not been invested into space research as was promised but landed in the bank accounts of those who have turned it into a gold mine. These people have a lot of weight in present-day Washington. Whether the US policy makers will fall hostage to these mighty groups remains to be seen.

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