

Russian Missiles in Baltic Area: “Adequate Countermeasure”

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Just as the Czechs are once again protesting against the planned construction of a US missile tracking radar in their country, Russian experts hope that when Barack Obama takes office in January, Washington could reconsider its planned missile shield deployments in Eastern Europe.

From a military angle, these deployments will not mean a great deal, while the political consequences of this could be hard to ignore, says Yuli Kvitsinsky who is deputy head of the State Duma’s international relations committee.

The American argument that the interceptor missiles are needed to shoot down Iranian missiles holds no water at all simply because Iran’s Shahab-3 missiles with an effective range of between 2,000 and 2,400 kilometers need to fly at least twice as far to reach Europe. With the oil prices going down the way they are, the Iranians will hardly be able to develop longer flying missiles any time soon. Equally surprising is Washington’s desire to deploy missile shield bases in northern Poland and not in the south as originally planned. Just like the Americans’ desire to deploy three-stage missiles and not two-stage ones, similar to the ones they now have in Alaska.

Russia fears that, instead of targeting some imaginary Iranian missiles, these interceptors could actually be meant to shoot down Russian ICBMs.

Russia’s ex-Air Force chief Pyotr Deinekin says that if he were a German, for example, he would feel real bad about having another US military base being set up in his country, and that Washington’s decision to turn Poland and the Czech Republic into a springboard for its missile forces in Europe is a slap in the face of millions of Poles and Czechs.

“We, Russia, literally telescoped into our territory and still we see NATO moving east,” he said. That’s why President Dmitry Medvedev’s recent threat to deploy Iskander short-range missiles in Kaliningrad Region in response to the US missile shield elements in Poland and the Czech Republic is seen by many experts as a perfectly adequate countermeasure. With a maximum range of 500 kilometers, the Iskander missiles are not strategic ones. The Polish base where the Americans are going to build their own interceptor missile silos is only 200 kilometers away from the Kaliningrad Region, meaning that the Russian missiles will only be targeting their Polish counterparts.

“Russia has enough potential to adequately respond to any kind of aggression,” General Deinekin says. “Our air force remains a formidable deterrent to be reckoned with and our missiles can fly into hit a small window, even a mobile phone,” he added.

Experts still hope that the upcoming change of guard in Washington could add a positive spin to the entire missile defense issue, even though it would be too optimistic to expect any dramatic change of wind in Washington.

With Barack Obama officially taking office on January 22, experts expect a new round of missile defense talks to be held in March.

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