

## Threatening Russia: US Wants Missile Defense Center in Czech Republic

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PRAGUE — The Czech prime minister said Friday 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.

Petr Necas said the purpose of the center was to gather and analyze information from satellite sensors “to detect missiles aiming at NATO territory.”

“It’s not supposed to be a huge military installation,” Necas said.

He said only several people will be needed to run the center, and that they could be from the U.S., NATO member countries or the Czechs after undergoing training.

It is not clear yet where in the country the installation could be based or when it could become operational. Necas said Prague was an option.

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, Necas said.

In September, the Obama administration scrapped Bush-era blueprints for basing long-range interceptors in Poland and a radar system in the Czech Republic as part of a missile defense shield designed to shoot down long-range missiles from countries including Iran.

It was strongly opposed by Russia and unpopular among the Czech public.

The new system is focused on short- and medium-range interceptors.

U.S. Vice President Joe Biden won agreement from the Czech Republic and Poland to join Obama’s reconfigured missile defense during his October visit to Prague and Warsaw.

To build the center, no new Czech-U.S. deal or parliamentary approval will be needed, Necas said.

His government may support the new U.S. plan but opponents say they were ready to protest again.

“It’s too serious to be silent,” said Jan Tamas who organized numerous protest rallies against the radar base proposed by the Bush administration.

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