

U.S. Anti-Missile Shield Could Spark Arms Race: Russian Army Chief

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By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, WARSAW

The planned U.S. anti-missile shield is a threat to global security as it could lead to another arms race, Russia's army chief, General Yuri Baluyevski, said in an article published in a Polish newspaper Sept. 6.

"Deploying the large-scale U.S. anti-missile shield threatens to spark a new arms race," Baluyevski said in the Polish daily Dziennik.

Of particular concern, according to Baluyevski, was Washington's intention to base some of the anti-missile shield in central Europe.

Poland and the Czech Republic are being considered for the European base of the anti-missile shield, although opposition to that plan is rising in both countries. Other countries where the United States could base its interceptor missiles and radar are Bulgaria, Hungary or Turkey.

"We are firmly convinced that, if the U.S. project is carried out, it could lead to the deployment near the Russian border of systems which threaten to upset the strategic balance in weapons positioning," Baluyevski said.

The U.S. missile defense system employs radar and satellites to detect enemy missile launches and guide interceptors to their targets. The command center is based in the southwestern U.S. state of Colorado, and interceptor missiles are located in Alaska and at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

The head of the U.S. missile defense agency, Gen. Henry Obering, said last month he expects to make recommendations in a matter of months on where to position interceptor missiles and radar in Europe.

The European site would be the first expansion outside of the United States of an unproven missile defense system that currently is aimed at thwarting a limited long-range missile attack from North Korea, the Middle East or terrorist groups.

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