

U.S. Missile Shield: Towards the Establishment of a Worldwide Missile Interceptor Network

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Synchronized announcements on September 17 by President Barack Obama and Defense Secretary Robert Gates that the U.S. was abandoning plans to station interceptor missiles in Poland and a forward-based missile radar site in the Czech Republic are now ten days ago and information surfacing in the interim indicates that its new plans are more far-reaching than their predecessor.

Two days after the statements by the American president and defense chief the latter, Pentagon head Robert Gates, was granted a column in the New York Times.

The most representative segment of Gates' comments is arguably this:

"I have been a strong supporter of missile defense ever since President Ronald Reagan first proposed it in 1983. But I want to have real capacity as soon as possible, and to take maximum advantage of new technologies....American missile defense on the continent will continue, and not just in Central Europe, the most likely location for future SM-3 sites, but, we hope, in other NATO countries as well....We are strengthening - not scrapping - missile defense in Europe." [1]

Remarking that the earlier-envisioned system in Poland and the Czech Republic would not have been operative until 2015 and that opposition among both nations' parliamentarians would have delayed the process at least another two years, Gates evinced both impatience with and far grander designs for the European wing of the U.S.'s global missile shield program by asserting, "President Obama...decided to discard that plan in favor of a vastly more suitable approach. In the first phase, to be completed by 2011, we will deploy proven, sea-based SM-3 interceptor missiles - weapons that are growing in capability...."

The new deployments, which will be examined in depth later, are to be more mobile and less capable of being anticipated and defended against; will be implemented, according to Gates' own schedule, at least eight years ahead of the prior plan's timeline; and will extend worldwide missile interceptor networks into far broader swathes of Eurasia, the Middle East and ultimately the planet as a whole.

Even in the first phase of the adapted - advanced - system that Gates first described on September 17, more developed technologies are to supplant what are already outdated ones that would have been applied to the Polish and Czech deployments. "[A] fixed radar site like the one previously envisioned for the Czech Republic would be far less adaptable than the airborne, space- and ground-based sensors we now plan to use."

The new system, in addition to being more effective and quickly operationalized, will be

much grander in scope and will include several times as many missiles as those intended for Poland, although that nation will still host different variants of medium-range interceptor missiles and, as Gates states below, will still eventually station long-range ground-based missiles.

“The second phase, which will become operational around 2015, will involve putting upgraded SM-3s [Standard Missile-3s] on the ground in Southern and Central Europe. All told, every phase of this plan will include scores of SM-3 missiles, as opposed to the old plan of just 10 ground-based interceptors....[O]ur military will continue research and development on a two-stage ground-based interceptor, the kind that was planned to be put in Poland, as a back-up.”

Scores means some multiple of twenty and one of America’s top military commanders has mentioned 100 as a starting point, as will be seen later.

SM-3s are the missiles employed by the U.S.’s Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System, which is a sea-based anti-ballistic missile interception program designed to be based off the coasts of targeted nations as needed to render ineffective those nations’ missile launch capabilities, both offensive and defensive.

They are also an integral component of the Pentagon’s Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a U.S.-led 90-nation international naval surveillance and interdiction project inaugurated by John Bolton in 2003 ostensibly to “interdict weapons of mass destruction” by confronting non-PSI nations’ vessels anywhere in the world.

SM-3s are also to be a staple item for America’s “thousand-ship navy,” first proposed by the then U.S. Navy’s Chief of Naval Operations Michael Mullen, now chairman of the armed forces Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In 2005 Mullen addressed the Seventeenth International Seapower Symposium at the Naval War College, in Newport, Rhode Island and said “the United States Navy cannot, by itself, preserve the freedom and security of the entire maritime domain. It must count on assistance from like-minded nations interested in using the sea for lawful purposes and precluding its use for others that threaten national, regional, or global security.” [2]

A detailed analysis of the Proliferation Security Initiative and the 1,000-Ship Navy is contained in an earlier article in this series, Proliferation Security Initiative And U.S. 1,000-Ship Navy: Control Of World’s Oceans, Prelude To War. [3]

As part of these plans for a U.S.-dominated worldwide navy with missile interception at its core, the United States has already recruited NATO and Asian NATO allies like Norway, Spain, Japan and South Korea into the Aegis combat system with its SM-3 missile shield capacity. India is slated to be the next partner.

Robert Gates also mentioned the application of SM-3s for ground use and the Pentagon will now base them both on land and more extensively at sea.

It was an SM-3 fired from an Aegis class cruiser, the USS Lake Erie, that destroyed a satellite in outer space in February of 2008, to provide an indication of what its next phase mission will be.

The updated missile system plan for Europe is also to be more fully integrated with

America's allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to provide an impenetrable layered shield throughout all of Europe and North America as well as moving into the Middle East, the Caucasus and beyond in the imminent future.

Voice of America confirmed this development on September 22 by revealing "The U.S. believes the plan will reinforce and strengthen ongoing NATO efforts on missile defense, most recently approved by Heads of State and Government at their April 2009 summit, and is fully supportive of previous summit decisions to pursue a NATO-wide multi-layered ballistic missile defense architecture." [4]

NATO remains committed not only to the advancement of a continent-wide missile shield but to the basing of U.S. nuclear weapons in all corners of Europe and their first use, even against non-nuclear powers.

In the midst of otherwise conciliatory comments last week, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stated "[W]e should not forget that NATO is...a military bloc, and its missiles are targeted against Russia. We do not feel excited about the fact that more and more nations are joining NATO, that it is expanding further and getting closer to our borders; we do not like it and we do not conceal our sentiments." [5]

The following day the chief of the Russian General Staff, General Nikolai Makarov, announced that his nation might still be compelled to base Iskander missiles in the nation's Kaliningrad enclave to counter U.S. missile plans in Poland (and perhaps later in the Baltic states) and warned that the Pentagon "will develop the missile defense network, but it will be sea-based." [6]

To confirm Makarov's contention, on September 24 Vice Admiral Richard Gallagher, deputy commander of the Pentagon's European Command [EUCOM], which shares a top commander and in other ways overlaps with NATO, spoke of the new U.S. missile shield system and characterized it as possessing "The intent...to use sea-based defence which, of course, has great flexibility as those ships can be moved to many different locations which gives us very good...ability to employ." Speaking on behalf of the bloc the U.S. dominates, he added that NATO "has not abandoned the missile defence discussions" and "from the U.S. perspective, you have not seen a change in desires to protect the region and to work in conjunction with NATO as well".[7]

Gallagher was speaking on the sidelines of a conference in Montenegro of the U.S.-Adriatic Charter, an initiative first launched by then Secretary of State Colin Powell in 2002 to militarily integrate and absorb all the nations of former Yugoslavia and the entire Southern Balkans.

Although he formally disavowed plans first leaked by the Polish daily Gazeta Wyborcza in late August for the Pentagon to shift its missile shield focus from Poland and the Czech Republic to the Balkans as well as to Israel and Turkey, Gallagher was officiating over a meeting to complete NATO's incorporation of an area that will be a choice location for American and NATO missile system deployments in the near future.

The Adriatic Charter's first accomplishment is to have added Albania and Croatia as NATO's 27th and 28th full members earlier this year and it is now grooming Macedonia, Bosnia and Montenegro - the world's newest nation - to follow suit. Serbia and Kosovo are next in line. Kosovo, not recognized by over two-thirds of the world's nations and as such not subject to

international treaties and constraints, would be an ideal site for U.S. and NATO military deployments of all sorts, including missiles and radar.

It's worth recalling that Vice Admiral Gallagher, as deputy commander of EUCOM, is not a NATO but a Pentagon official, yet is instrumental in recruiting several of the European nations not already Alliance members into the bloc. His superior, Adm. James Stavridis, who is both head of U.S. European Command and NATO Supreme Allied Commander, was also present at the conference in Montenegro. All five Adriatic Charter states – Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro – have provided NATO with troops for the war in Afghanistan.

Other top American military commanders have also corroborated the claims by President Obama and defense chief Gates that the U.S., far from retreating from missile shield plans, is escalating them in range, depth and effectiveness.

The director of the Missile Defense Agency, Lieutenant General Patrick O'Reilly, recently stated that "We are not scrapping missile defense. Rather, we are strengthening it and delivering more capability sooner." O'Reilly is in charge of the Pentagon command that is most immediately in charge of developing the global missile shield and his words carry corresponding weight. Note that his expression that the Pentagon is not scrapping but strengthening interceptor missile plans is identical to that used by his chief, Defense Secretary Gates, in the latter's New York Times column.

Speaking before the Senate Armed Services Committee on September 24, "O'Reilly said the old system would only have the capacity to shoot down five missiles, estimating two interceptors would be fired at each missile threat. He said the newer system would have much more capacity. The missile interceptor ships alone are capable of shooting down about 100 missiles." [8]

His briefing also included the observation that "The new architecture keeps plans for a radar station in Southeastern Europe, but would also track radar by satellite and ships. Land-based missiles would be deployed at two sites, one in northern Europe and another in southern Europe.

"Placing one of these sites in Poland remains an option...." [9]

Undersecretary of Defense Michele Flournoy also testified before the committee and echoing previous statements by Robert Gates and others said, "This is not about Russia. It's never been about Russia." She added, "the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was 'very supportive.'"

Flournoy touted the role of SM-3s for use on board ships and on land alike, stating "This means greater geographic flexibility, greater survivability and greater scalability in response to an evolving threat. That's exactly what we mean by a phased, adaptive approach." [10]

O'Reilly concurred, hailing the interceptor missile as "a very capable weapon due to its high acceleration, burn velocity and its proven track record" which provides an "ability to rapidly increase to over 80 interceptors at any one launch site." [11]

Flournoy, O'Reilly and other panelists, including Marine General James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "provided several advantages of the new system. It

would begin protecting European allies in 2011, roughly six years sooner than the old system, and its missiles, costing \$10 million each, are much cheaper than those planned for the old system, which cost about \$70 million.” [12]

On September 25 a column appeared in the Washington Post titled “Reagan’s Missile Defense Triumph” by Andrew Nagorski, vice president and director of public policy at the EastWest Institute in New York.

The feature celebrates U.S. global missile shield plans, particularly the innovations announced during the past ten days, as a realization of former President Ronald Reagan’s infamous Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly known as Star Wars.

The author wrote that “on a...fundamental level...Reagan would recognize that the announcement represents a watershed moment in American politics. It signals that, for the first time since Reagan made his ‘Star Wars’ speech in 1983 spelling out his vision of a missile shield...both political parties have accepted his notion that the country needs an effective missile defense system. The debate is no longer focused on whether to build such a system but on what kind of system will do the job better job....” [13]

Further endorsing the new system and exposing claims that it represents either a retreat from the scope of the earlier version or a concession to Russia, the writer added:

“[T]he president has argued that his plan will produce ‘stronger, smarter, swifter’ missile defense than the Bush alternative. In other words, the Obama administration’s line, as spelled out by the president, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and others, is unambiguous when it comes to embracing missile defense as a necessary component of the U.S. arsenal.” [14]

A pro-missile defense analyst based in Central Asia recently expressed a similar perspective, writing that “The US policy reversal has...come as a result of the considerable progress made by the Pentagon in missile technology, especially in technical improvements to systems using interceptors, land, sea, air and space-based sensors.”

He also provided an insight into the true purpose of the U.S.-led global missile interception system:

“[A]n anti-missile shield on Poland’s and the Czech Republic’s territories – and anti-missile radars on Georgia’s territory – would have decreased the nuclear capabilities of those countries already possessing nuclear weapons. The Pentagon’s goal was precisely to downgrade the nuclear potentials of individual countries....

“It was clear that Washington’s proposal for building an anti-missile system in Europe was intended to be the last nail in the coffin of the ABM Treaty and bring Russia to its knees in the military sector.” [15]

A Russian analyst, Viktoria Panova, recently wrote something to the same effect, comparing the current American missile subterfuge to the period of the genesis of missile shield plans, that of the Reagan and first Bush era:

“America can push Russia either on Iran or another issue of concern, so it’s very similar to what it was during the last days of the Soviet Union when America was playing with the ABM

system being developed.

“Then, using that ‘threat’ as an instrument, the US managed to alter the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty that Russia was pushing for into a more favorable one for America.” [16]

The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was signed in 1972 by the U.S.’s Richard Nixon and the Soviet Union’s Leonid Brezhnev, and the George W. Bush administration unilaterally withdrew from it in 2002. The first threat to the treaty, though, was the Reagan administration’s Strategic Defense Initiative.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) expires this December 5. “The United States plans to let a landmark nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russia expire in 2009 and replace it with a less formal agreement that eliminates strict verification requirements and weapons limits, a senior US official says.” [17]

In both instances U.S. missile shield – and space war – policies are designed among other purposes to place Russia at a strategic disadvantage in regards to negotiations over nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

To compound the threat, the U.S. hasn’t even renounced plans for missile deployments in Poland, as Missile Defense Agency chief O’Reilly informed the U.S. Senate on September 24.

On September 18 Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski – former resident fellow of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, executive director of the New Atlantic Initiative and adviser to Rupert Murdoch and husband of American journalist Anne Applebaum – said that the 100 Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missiles the Pentagon still plans to station in his country will be combat ready. Sikorski affirmed that “Poland has been promised by the U.S. that it will go ahead with the deployment of a Patriot battery in Poland and that the missiles will be armed.” [18]

Six days later Slawomir Nowak, adviser to Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, announced that the U.S. could task his nation to base short- to medium-range missiles as part of “its new, flexible missile system.”

Nowak was quoted as saying, “If this system becomes a reality it would actually be better for us than the original missile shield programme.” [19]

Polish Radio announced that “Washington may ask Poland eventually to host SM-3 anti-ballistic missiles, currently being manufactured by Lockheed-Martin.” [20]

Nowak confirmed the information, saying: “We are familiar with the SM-3 system and the Americans have assured us that Poland is one of the countries where they want to place this system.” He also offered an ex post facto refutation of the American missile shield rationale by stating “We were never really threatened by a long-range missile attack from Iran.” [21]

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was even more blunt in a column she wrote for the Financial Times a few days before.

She reiterated comparable claims by President Obama and Defense Secretary Gates in writing, “We are enhancing our capacity to protect our interests and our allies. We are not walking away from our allies but are deploying a system that enhances allied security,

advances our cooperation with NATO, and actually placing more resources in more countries.”

Clinton mentioned in particular American military commitments to fellow NATO states, especially Poland and the Czech Republic, and as Obama had done on September 17 invoked NATO’s Article 5 military assistance clause, fraught as it is with the prospect of nuclear confrontation and even war.

“An attack on London or Warsaw is an attack on New York or Washington. NATO demonstrated this commitment after the September 11 terrorist attacks.” [22]

Western media accounts over the past ten days have been replete with a steady refrain that Czechs and Poles feel “betrayed” by the new U.S. missile plans.

Such claims are easily enough refuted by surveys demonstrating that 70 percent of Czechs and 55 percent of Poles were opposed to the deployment of third position missile shield installations on their soil.

But to the West the only Czechs and Poles whose opinions are worth considering are U.S.-trained subordinates, like Poland’s Sikorski, at the beck and call of their masters in Washington and Brussels.

Residents of the Polish village of Redzikowo where the Pentagon was to place ten ground-based missiles were exuberant over the news that their homes might not be turned into ground zero in Europe’s first missile exchange.

“Mariusz Chmiel, head of the rural district that includes Redzikowo, was a long-time opponent of the shield who celebrated the US decision with champagne. ‘I was against this shield from the very beginning,’ Chmiel said. ‘I was very happy. It means our residents can continue to feel safe.’”

However, his sense of relief may prove short-lived as “Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorki said the US had assured Poland that armed Patriot missiles will still be located on Polish territory and will ‘likely’ be located in Redzikowo.” [23]

Matters are no better in the Czech Republic, which will also not be granted much of a reprieve. A local news source reminded its readers that “Clinton said on Friday the Czech Republic and Poland are major candidates for hosting new mobile anti-missiles that the United States plans to deploy in Europe instead of the originally planned bases.”

It added that “Czech Defence Minister Martin Bartak said after his talks with U.S. National Security Council chief James Jones on Friday that Prague will discuss with Washington participation in the new form of the anti-missile system by the year’s end.” [24]

National Security Adviser Jones, a retired four-star Marine general, was top military commander of NATO in Europe and the Pentagon’s European Command from 2003-2007 during the initial crafting of Star Wars plans for Eastern Europe.

Recently the Polish Gazeta Wyborcza, the same newspaper that broke the story on American plans to shift its missile shield deployments to the Balkans and the Middle East a month ago, cited Polish diplomatic officials in claiming “After the White House announced shelving a planned missile shield in Eastern Europe, Washington is planning to establish

missile bases in Poland.” [25]

The same source wrote that “Andrzej Kremer, Poland’s deputy foreign minister, was due to travel to Washington on Monday to discuss the plan....Washington’s permanent Polish base is due to be established at Redzikowo, near the Baltic coast....” [26]

It is not only Russia’s northwest border that will be affected, though.

A Georgian website recently ran a feature called “Controversy: anti-missile systems in the Caucasus” which included:

“Although it has not yet been specified whether they [missile shield components] will be put somewhere in the Black Sea, Turkey or another country the Caucasus was directly mentioned as a possible site for these systems, the only possible location specifically given by [a] US official at a recent press conference on the subject....The Georgian administration has welcomed the US decision.” [27]

The deployment of U.S. interceptor missile shield installations in Georgia, on Russia’s southern border, would be exacerbated if, as an Armenian news sources claimed on September 24, “[T]he Pentagon is drafting an agreement with Georgia. Under the agreement the United States is to deploy two land force and one naval base in Georgia before 2015. The construction is to start in 2014, to be completed the following year. Thus, the Pentagon plans to deploy 25,000 troops in Georgia.” [28]

Last week a conference was held on Georgia’s neighbor to the east, Azerbaijan, in Washington, DC.

The Conference on Strategic Cooperation Between the U.S. and Azerbaijan: New Bilateral and Regional Criteria held in Washington included an address by David Kramer, former U.S. Undersecretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and fellow of the German Marshall Fund, in which he spoke of the use of Azerbaijan’s “Gabala radar station for missile defense.” [29]

An Azerbaijani website published this report on September 22:

“The plan to scrap missile defence in Eastern Europe could shift the geostrategic balance of power in the Caucasus....[M]issile defence has not been scrapped, as critics claim. Indeed, missiles are still going to be deployed in Europe, as well as at sea, and will actually be deployed earlier than under the Bush-era plan.

“Georgia...hopes the hunt for more effective bases for missile defence may increase its importance.

“This is because the Caucasus has emerged as one of the most important possible locations for a revamped missile defence plan. Situated on a direct path between Iran and Europe, the region has been discussed as a possible host site for early-warning systems and missiles for years.” [30]

In a recent article, analyst Rakesh Krishnan Simha quoted Konstantin Sivkov, Vice President of the Moscow-based Academy of Geopolitical Problems, on the change in U.S. missile shield designs:

“By temporarily dropping its missile shield, the US is just trying to sell a dead cat for good money. But it’s not a breakthrough that gives the US and NATO the right to demand military and technical concessions from Russia. One of the new radars and naval missile components could be set up in the Caucasus, anyway. Georgia has already agreed to host the radar.” [31]

On September 22 A. Wess Mitchell, Director of Research at the Center for European Policy Analysis, was interviewed by the Trend News Agency of Azerbaijan about new U.S. missile shield intentions. “At present, the emphasis appears to be on the Balkans, Turkey and Israel.”

The news site quoted another expert stating “Concerning Israel, the US has already installed a powerful missile defense radar in the Negev desert, so it might be considered a possibility to transfer the defense shield to Israel” and, citing Ephraim Kam, Deputy Head of the Institute for National Security Studies of Israel, revealed that “The U.S. can deploy the MDS [Missile Defense Shield] in Israel, but it is a possibility not linked necessarily to the abandoning of its missile system deployment in Eastern Europe or Central Europe.” [32]

The Israeli daily Haaretz wrote on September 20 that the Israeli Defense Forces and the U.S. military were to include missile defense maneuvers in the course of their biennial Juniper Cobra war games next month. “[T]he drill is also part of U.S. President Barack Obama’s new missile defense plan, under which the Pentagon will initially deploy ships with missile interceptors instead of stationing missile defense systems in Eastern Europe....The report came shortly before Defense Minister Ehud Barak was to leave for the United States, where he was to meet with his counterpart, Robert Gates.” [33]

Another Israeli newspaper characterized the development like this:

“Israel and the US are preparing for an upcoming joint military exercise, dubbed Juniper Cobra - which will include the largest exercise yet between the IDF and the US Military’s European Command (EUCOM) and the US Missile Defense Agency (MDA).” [34]

A Washington Post article of last week entitled “Israel Finds Strength in Its Missile Defenses: Advanced System Could Alter Strategic Decisions in Region” offered more details on interceptor plans for the Middle East, ones underway long before Washington’s September 17 revelations.

“Israel and the United States [will conduct] a joint, biennial missile defense exercise, called Juniper Cobra, to work on integrating the weapons, radars and other systems of the two countries.

“Israel, for example, has the advanced U.S. X-Band radar stationed in the Negev desert. Israeli defense industry officials say the country also has almost real-time access to some U.S. satellite data, an important part of its early-warning system.” [35]

The Middle East, the Balkans, the South Caucasus and the Baltic Sea region aren’t lone in being intended sites for the expansion of American global missile shield deployments.

The Korea Times of September 22 confirmed that the plans are indeed international in reporting that “a local news report that the U.S. administration of President Barack Obama may ask South Korea to join the missile shield initiative despite its recent modification of the BMD [Ballistic Missile Defense] plan.

“The report cited a report written by the Missile Defense Agency affiliated with the U.S. Department of Defense, describing South Korea as one of the nations to potentially join the BMD effort.

“The report categorized South Korea, Bahrain, France, Germany, India, Qatar and some other nations as the ‘nations expressing interest in missile defense.’” [36]

For anyone hoping that the threat of unilateral actions by the West to make itself resistant to missile attacks, conventional and nuclear, while rendering the rest of the world defenseless and thus fair game for first strikes was diminishing, this report should clarify matters.

On September 25 NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) launched a rocket carrying two experimental missile-tracking satellites for the Missile Defense Agency.

Reports that the White House was effectively merging what is technically the civilian NASA with the Pentagon’s Missile Defense Agency for missile interception and space war purposes have circulated since the current American president’s election victory last November. The process now appears well underway.

A local Florida news source wrote beforehand of the launch that “If the satellites work, it would mean the U.S. would be able to launch dozens of similar satellites....” [37]

A Florida television station reported that the satellites are part of the Space Tracking and Surveillance System [STSS], “a \$1.5 billion project” that “will be used by the U.S. Missile Defense Agency to test the ‘birth to death’ tracking of missiles from launch to re-entry.” [38]

Northrop Grumman’s STSS program manager, Gabe Watson, was quoted on the day of the launch claiming “We can track missiles in every stage of flight, from launch to intercept, and do hit assessment as well. If the MDA [Missile Defense Agency] wants to intercept missiles in the ascent phase, they will need additional data that [current missile warning satellites] don’t provide.” [39]

To tie together two threads in the U.S.’s new generation missile shield program, it was reported that “The STSS satellites follow NASA’s launch of another missile defense satellite – the STSS Advanced Technology Risk Reduction spacecraft – in early May.

“They may also play a role in two other tests with other defense systems such as the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense system....” [40]

Former plans for interceptor missile facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic, employing as they were to have antiquated technology, have been superseded by new projects that will encompass broader regions of the world and will coordinate deployments on land, at sea, in the air and in space.

Notes

1) New York Times, September 19, 2009

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